Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī

Edited by: Tawheed Institute Australia

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	-
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

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Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsá	Moses
Dawūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibraḥīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾJob	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Maryam	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or (s.a.w.) which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

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Foreword

This second edition volume 9 of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* comprises of the *tafsīr* of verses 77-176 of Sūrah Āl-Nisāʾ which is a continuation from Eng. volume 8, and the first three verses of Sūrah al-Māʾidah.

The first discussion in this volume under the Chapter 4 is on the attribution of good and evil to God. The discussion shows first, that all good comes from God, because every good thing is His creation and the creation is not separable from goodness; second, no harm, evil or misfortune is attributable to God, because evil, per se, is not created, and He is the Creator. ʿAllāmah says that when God withholds His mercy from people because of what their hands have done, it is called misfortune, calamity or evil.

The second important discussion in this volume is on the meaning of *al-ʾIsmah* (usually translated as "sinlessness"). In this discussion we learn that the basic factor from which *al-ʾIsmah* emanates is a sort of knowledge which prevents the knower from indulging in sin and mistake. In other words, knowledge prevents one from going astray.

This volume ends with the commentary of three verses of Chapter 5, Sūrah al-Māʾidah. The first discussion under this sūrah concerns the Qur'anic sense of *ʿaqd* (contract). With reference to the verse, *…The cattle quadrupeds are allowed to you …* (5:1) and its following verse, the permissibility of the flesh of various animals is discussed. ʿAllāmah discusses this issue logically and scientifically in three sections, and the Islamic view in this respect is compared with those of other religions.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd are thankful to those who took the painstaking task of editing the first Eng. volume (previously published by WOFIS) and to bring this new edition to completion. We hope the readers will welcome this edition with much enthusiasm.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd
August, 2022

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About the Translator

The late ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī was one of the most sincere preachers of Islam and an active scholar, both when he was in Tanzania in the Bilāl Muslim Mission (an Islamic organization active in Tanzania), and also when he returned to his own country of India. In the way of spreading Islam he has rendered enormous services and had been most active.

ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī had written scores of books and booklets in English, Urdu and Swahili, many of which have been published; and some other titles which have been published by WOFIS. Some of his books have been translated and published by in French, Italian, Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, Hausa and other languages.

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About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imām, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers,

1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others.

particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and knowledge. A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar Khwānsārī (1313– 80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mūsawī, known as "the mathematician." ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

ʿAllāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbahʾī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Mūsá, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, ʿAllāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qurʾan to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qurʾan, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige which ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i riʾalism* [Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism]. This book is a comparative

study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shiʿa dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shiʾite Islam*. The ʿAllāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qurʾan with the help of the Qurʾan itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

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Chapter 4

Sūrah Al-Nisāʾ

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Verses 77–80

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

The verses are connected to the preceding ones, and all together are in one context. These verses throw light on the affairs of another group of the believers of weak faith; they contain admonition and remind them that this world is transient while the blessings of the hereafter are ever-lasting; and they explain a Qur'anic reality concerning good and evil.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ
فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ
أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً ۚ وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ
قَرِيبٍ ۗ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ
فَتِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

(4:77) ***Have you not seen those to whom it was said: "Withhold your hands, and establish prayer and pay zakāt"; but when fighting is prescribed for them, lo! a party of them fear men as they ought to have feared Allah, or (even) a greater fear, and say: "Our Lord! why hast Thou ordained fighting for us Wherefore didst thou not grant us a delay to a near end?" Say: "The provision of this world is short and the hereafter is better for him who guards (against evil); and you shall not be wronged the husk of a date-stone"***

To withhold hands implies refraining from fighting—as the killings (which are a part of fighting) are done by hands. This verse shows that the

Muslims, when faced in the beginning with tyrannies and oppressions of the unbelievers, felt unable to restrain themselves and bear the oppressions with patience. They were eager to draw sword. But God ordered them to refrain from fighting; they were rather exhorted to establish the religious rites such as prayer and *zakāt*, in order to strengthen the religious tenets and faith and establish them on firm footing; only then would God allow them to fight His enemies. Otherwise, the structure of religion would crumble, its pillars would fall down and all its parts would deteriorate.

Obviously, the verses blame those believers: It were they who were impatient to fight the unbelievers, and did not like to withhold their hands even at a time when they did not have any power or armaments to stand before the enemies. But when fighting was prescribed and ordained, a group among them felt terrified of the enemy (who were human beings like themselves) as they should have feared God—or even a greater fear than that.

…and say: "Our Lord! why hast Thou ordained fighting for us": Apparently, it is in conjunction with, *a part of them fear men;* this explanation looks more appropriate when we ponder on the change of tense from "fear men" (aorist tense) to "say" (which in original text is "said", that is, past tense). Therefore, the complainants were those very people who in the beginning were so eager to fight and had claimed that they could not bear patiently all those tyrannies of unbelievers; and who at that time were told to restrain themselves.

Again, the sentence, ["Our Lord! why hast Thou ordained fighting for us Wherefore didst Thou not grant us a delay to a near end?"] may be an exposition of their hidden feelings and real condition. Or, it may be a narration of their actual saying. We find many dramatic expressions in the Qur'an.

The "end"—that is, death in normal way—is called "near"; it does not mean that they wanted deliverance from being killed so that they could live a little longer. Rather, it brings into open their feelings that even if they were not killed until they died a natural death, it would still be a short life and near end; so why was not God willing to let them live that short period? Why did He afflict them with quick death? Why did He put them in danger of being killed?

They speak in this manner because their hearts are entangled with this life—which in Qur'anic view is but a short provision which is going to end quickly without leaving any trace; and then will come the life

hereafter which is the eternal and real life, the really good, rather better, life. That is why their views are rebutted in the words: *Say: "The provision of this world is short".*

Say: "The provision of this world is short … the husk of a date-stone": God orders the Prophet to reply to these people of weaker faith by exposing their misconception; by showing to them how mistaken they are in preferring this world's short life over the dignity of *jihād* and martyrdom in the way of God. In short, they are expected to be pious in their belief, when compared to the hereafter, is a short provision, and the hereafter is better for pious ones who guard against evil. Therefore, they should opt for the hereafter which is better than the short provision of this world, for they are believers and on the path of piety. Do they fear that God will harm them or do injustice to them? Is it for this fear that they prefer immediate provision in their hands over the promised good? They should not entertain such ideas because God will never do any injustice to them even like the husk of a date-stone.

This description shows that the word, "for him who guards (against evil)", in a way puts the adjective in place of its qualified noun in order to disclose the underlying reason of this statement and asserts its applicability to the subject in hand. The implication is this—and God knows better: The hereafter is better for you because you, being believers, are supposed to be the people of piety, and the piety makes one achieve the good of the hereafter. In a way, the words, "for him who guards (against evil)", is an indirect criticism of that group.

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكْكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُشَيَّدَةٍ ۗ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَٰذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَٰذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ ۚ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ۖ فَمَالِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٧٨﴾

(4:78) ***Wherever you are, death will overtake you, though you are in lofty towers; and if benefit comes to them, they say: "This is from Allah"; and if a misfortune befalls them, they say: "This is from you." Say: "All is from Allah;" but what is the matter with these people that they would not understand any matter?***

al-Burūj is plural of *al-burj* (tower). It is constructed on forts with

extremely strengthened foundation, for repelling the enemy from it and with its help. Its original meaning is show, appearance; and from it, is derived *al-tabarruj* (displaying the adornments, etc.). *al-Tashyīd* (setting up) is derived from *al-shayd* (mortar), because it strengthens and raises the building and decorates it. *al-Burūju al-mushayyadah* refers to strong lofty edifices built on forts into which man takes shelter from advancing enemy.

This sentence describes a reality wrapped in an example. The "lofty towers" stands for every strong edifice used as shelter against calamities. In short, it says: Death is something you cannot escape from even if you take refuge in strong shelters. Therefore, you should not think that if you were absent from battle-field or if *jihād* was not prescribed for you, you would have remained safe from death or that death could not have overtaken you. The death decreed by God will surely reach you.

…and if a benefit comes to them, they say: "This is from Allah;" and if a misfortune befalls them, they say: "This is from you." Say: "All is from Allah": Two more examples of their foolish talks have been quoted here, and then God orders His Prophet to give its rebuttal by describing the reality about benefit or harm which comes to a man.

The context shows that it was said by the same believers of weaker faith who are mentioned in preceding verses. It may be based on their actual words, or an inference from their behavior. There is nothing new in it, because Moses also was confronted with a similar accusation; as God has described in the Qur'an: *But when good came to them they said: "This is due to us;" and when evil afflicted them, they attributed it to the ill-luck of Moses and those with him; surely their evil omen is only from Allah, but most of them do not know* (7:131). The same attitude is reported, from all nations *vis-à-vis* their prophets; and this *ummah* in its dealings with its Prophet was not behind other nations. God says: *their hearts are all alike…* (2:118); moreover, they resemble most of all to the Children of Israel; and the Messenger of God has said: "They (the Israelites) would not have entered a burrow of a lizard but you too would enter it." We have earlier quoted traditions to this effect from both sects.

Many exegetes have artfully tried to show that these verses were revealed about the Jews, or the hypocrites, or the Jews and the hypocrites together; but obviously the context rejects such interpretation.

In any case, the verse, in this context, shows that the benefit and misfortune here refer to some things which could be attributed to God;

but they attributed one group, that is, benefits and good fortunes to God, and the other group, that is, harm and misfortunes to the Prophet. The good fortunes and misfortunes refer to those occurrences which they were faced with when the Prophet came to them and began raising the edifice of religion and spreading his Call through *jihād*; so these words refer, respectively, to victory and war-booty in the encounters and battles which they won, and being slain and wounded and getting troubles in the others. They attributed the misfortunes to the Prophet saying that it was his ill omen, or accusing him of unsound decision and mismanagement. God, then, ordered His Prophet to refute their claim in these words: Say: "All is from Allah." These are the happenings and misfortunes arranged by the highest authority of this universe, that is, God alone, Who has no partner or colleague, inasmuch as all things submit to God only—and to no one else—in their existence, continuity and all forthcoming events and incidents. This is what the Qur'an teaches us.

Then He asks, like the one who is astonished to see their petrified understanding and dull mind: *but what is the matter with these people that they would not understand any matter*, and are unable to know and grasp such a clear reality.

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ ۚ
وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٩﴾

(4:79) *Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself; and We have sent you (O Prophet) to mankind as a Messenger, and Allah is sufficient as a witness.*

It was told that: *they would not understand any matter.* Therefore, now that God intends to explain the reality, this verse particularly addresses the Prophet [in 2nd person singular] ignoring those people of low understanding. It explains the reality of good fortune and misfortune that come to a man. The Prophet is not different from others in this reality which is common to all existing things, or at least covers all human beings, believers and disbelievers, virtuous and evil, prophets and common men.

Good or beautiful are the things which man likes by nature, like health, bounties, security and comfort; and they are all from God. Evil or ugly are the things which he dislikes, like disease, humiliation, poverty and

mischief; all this in final analysis is caused by man, and is not attributed to God. The verse, in this sense, is not very far from the verse: *This is because Allah does never change a bounty which He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition, and because Allah is Hearing, Knowing* (8:53). This reality is not contrary to another universal fact—that all good and evil emanates from God, when looked from another angle, as will be explained below.

…and We have sent you (O Prophet!) to mankind as a Messenger, and Allah is sufficient as a witness: Your only distinction, bestowed by Us, is that you are Our Messenger; you are responsible for conveying Our message to them; and your prestige is of the Divine Messengership. You do not have any other status, nor do you have any power in these affairs. Consequently, you are not responsible for any good luck or misfortune coming to them. You could not bring evil to the people nor can you keep any good away from them. It is an indirect refutation of those who attributed bad luck to the Prophet and said: *"This is from you"*, perceiving him as an ill omen. Then the refutation is strengthened with the words: "and God is sufficient as a witness".

مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ ۖ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ﴿٨٠﴾

(4:80) ***Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah; and whoever turns back, so We have not sent you as a keeper over them.***

A new sentence strengthens and reconfirms the preceding statement: *and We have sent you to mankind as a Messenger.* It also gives the reason for the order given here: You are but Our Messenger; whoever obeys you because of Messengership *he indeed obeys Allah and whoever turns back, so We have not sent you as a keeper over them.*

Obviously, the phrase, "Whoever obeys the Messenger", is a sort of adjective put in place of its noun, and it points to the underlying reason of this declaration, as was the case with the sentence: *and the hereafter is better for him who guards (against evil); and you shall not be wronged the husk of a date-stone*. Accordingly, the theme continues in the same direction, without turning from 2nd person (*and We have sent you*) to the 3rd. (*Whoever obeys the Messenger*) and again to the 2nd (*We have*

not sent you…).

Attribution of Good and Evil to God

[*al-Hasanah* (good, merit, benefit, beautiful) is opposite of *al-Sayyiah* (evil, sin, ugly, misfortune)] Probably, man first became aware of the sense of "beauty" by looking at his fellow human beings' good feature, that is, balanced stature, well-proportioned limbs and lovely face. Then the meaning was extended to other material objects and phenomena; and finally it was used for "conformity of a thing with its natural purpose".

A human face is called beautiful when its eyes, eye-brows, ears, nose and mouth, etc. are exactly in the shape they should be, and are aligned to one another properly; This in its turn attracts the hearts and excites admiration and love.

If a thing is bereft of beauty, it is called bad, evil and ugly—various words used in different contexts. Ugliness therefore is a negative connotation as beauty is a positive one.

Then the concepts were extended to actions, abstract ideas and other characteristics found in a social set-up, keeping in view whether they were in conformity with society's purpose or not; whether they agree with felicity of human life and its enjoyment or not. Justice is good; doing good to a deserving person is a merit; it is a virtue to educate, to train, to give good advice, etc., where it is needed. Injustice, transgression and similar things are evil and ugly. Why? Because the first group of actions is in accord with the man's felicity and happiness and enables him to enjoy fully the benefits his society offers, while the second is not so. This merit and virtue (and this evil and demerit) get their characteristics from the actions they are related to. There are some actions whose virtue is ever-lasting and perpetual, e.g., justice, because their consistency with the society's aim and purpose is enduring and permanent. Likewise, there are some perpetual demerits like injustice.

On the other hand, there are some actions whose characteristics differ from time to time, place to place and society to society. Laughter and jokes are good in friends' gatherings, but not in presence of elders; in joyous functions, not in mourning assemblies nor in mosques and other places of worship. Fornication and liquor-drinking is good in the Western societies, but evil and sin in the Muslims' eyes.

You should not listen to those who say that ethical values are relative, and no action has inherent merit or demerit in itself. They say that virtue

and evil are always changing, they have no permanency, no endurance; they are not absolute. They give example of justice and injustice; a system which a group considers based on justice, is diametrically opposed to that which another nation calls just and fair. Flogging a fornicator is justice in Islam, but not so in the Western countries; and so on and so forth. Thus meaning of justice is not fixed and permanent.

But such people are totally confused. They do not differentiate between the meaning [of justice, for example,] and its practical application. We should have no track with people of such a low intelligence.

The fact is that man is ready to change all his social customs, at once or gradually, according to the changing circumstances of the society; but he will never agree that he is deprived of the attribute of "justice", that is, he is called "unjust". Even if he sees a friend oppressing someone, he will try to find excuses for him [but will not admit that his friend was unjust]. This topic needs detailed discussion, but this is not the place for it, because we are in the middle of a more important discourse. Lastly, the meaning of good and evil was further extended to cover all external happenings which man is faced with in his life owing to various factors. These are the individual or collective events, some of which agree with his expectations and conform with his individual or collective life's felicity, like health and comfort. These are called good or benefits. There are other happenings on the opposite side like calamities and sorrows, poverty or sickness, humiliation or imprisonment, etc.; and they are called evil or misfortune.

It appears from the above that when good and evil are attributed to various affairs or actions, it is done with this criterion in mind: Are these affairs or action in conformity with human perfection or felicity or not. Good and evil are two attributes which are seen in relation to human felicity. This relationship in some cases is lasting and perpetual; while in other things it is changing. For instance, monetary help is good if given to a deserving person, and bad if dished out to an undeserving man.

Good is always a positive thing, while evil and ugliness has negative connotation. That is, an evil thing or action lacks the above-mentioned conformity with human felicity. Otherwise, if we ignore this conformity or non-conformity, then the thing or action by itself is one and the same without any difference whatsoever.

Earthquake and flood devastate a community; they are evil and misfortune in their eyes, but their enemies will count them as blessings and good fortune for themselves. Every general calamity, looked from the

religion's view-point, is good if it visits the unbelievers, who create mischief in the earth; but the same will be seen as evil and bad if it attacks a believing and good community. Eating food is good and lawful, if it is prepared from one's own money; and the same will become evil and unlawful if it is a part of another man's property taken without his permission. Why? Because it lacks obedience to the prohibition in respect of eating other people's property without permission; or the obedience to the imperative order of restricting oneself to those things only which God has allowed. Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman is good and lawful if it follows marriage; and is evil and sin if it is illicit, without marriage—because the latter lacks conformity with divine commandment. In short, good is a positive aspect of things and actions, and evil is their negative aspect, although the thing or action itself is the same in both cases.

According to Qur'an, all that is called "thing" (except God Himself) is created by God. *Allah is the Creator of every thing* (39:62);… *and He created every thing, then ordained for it a measure* (25:2). The two verses show that every thing is His creation. Then God says: [God] *Who made good every thing that He has created* (32:7). Thus, every created thing is good, and this goodness is an integral part of creation which cannot be separated from it; if it is God's creation, it is good.

Every thing has its share of beauty according to its share in creation and existence. If you ponder on the meaning of beauty, described earlier, you will understand our stand more clearly. A thing is good and beautiful if it conforms with the purpose it is intended for; and all parts of existence and all portions of this universe are consistent and in complete harmony with each other. Far be it from the Lord of the universe to create a thing whose parts lack consistency and harmony, or work against each other, as it would negate the intended purpose. Can a created thing overpower the Creator? Or, negate the purpose intended for this wonderful system which astonishes the intelligence and stuns the mind? God says: *He is Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all)* (39:4); *and He is the Supreme above His servants* (6:18); *and Allah is not such that any thing in the heavens or in the earth should weaken Him; surely He is the Knowing,the Powerful* (35:44). Thus, nothing can overpower God or weaken Him in anything He intends from His creatures and wishes about His servants.

Consequently, every good blessing in creation is attributed to Him. Likewise, every evil calamity, when seen by itself, and looked according to the basic relationship encompassing the whole creation, is attributable

to God—although it seems evil when looked from another angle. It is this reality which is described in some verses of the Qur'an: *and if a benefit comes to them, they say: "It is from Allah;" and if a misfortune befalls you, they say: "This is from you." Say: "All is from Allah;" but what is the matter with these people that well-nigh they do not understand what is told (them)?* (4:78); *But when good came to them they said: "This is due to us;" and when evil afflicted them, they attributed it to the ill-luck of Moses and those with him; surely their ill omen is only from Allah, but most of them do not know* (7:131). There are other verses of the same theme.

As for misfortune, the Qur'an attributes that of the man to the man himself. God says: *Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself* (4:79); *And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and (yet) He pardons most (of your faults)* (42:30); *Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition* (13:11); *This is because Allah does never change a bounty which He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition* (8:53); there are many such verses.

In more clear words, the preceding verses show that the calamities and misfortunes too, like good fortunes, are good and beautiful in their creation. Then how do they turn into misfortunes? It is only because they do not agree with some people's, or some thing's, nature and these things or people get hurt by them. It means that God had not created in these items what would agree with these people or things. It is this withholding of generosity which is considered misfortune or calamity for the people or things that get harmed by them, as is clearly seen in the verse: *Whatever Allah grants to men of (His) mercy, there is none to withhold it, and what He withholds there is none to send it forth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise* (35:2).

Therefore, God states that this withholding of generosity (when it is withheld), or increase or decrease in sending His mercy forth depends on the ability or capacity of the subject: How much is a person or thing able to benefit from His mercy? God explains it in a simile: *He sends down water from the cloud, then the valleys flow* (with water) *according to their measure* (13:17). Also, He says: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure* (15:21). Thus, God bestows a favor on a thing according to what it deserves and keeping its condition in consideration. *Does He not know Who has created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware* (67:14).

With that blessing and affliction, tribulation and comfort from one thing to another according to its particular situation and condition, as God says: *And every one has a direction to which he would turn* (2:148). Every thing turns to that direction and seeks that item which agrees with its situation.

From the above discourse you will easily understand that happiness and distress, blessing and affliction, *vis-à-vis* this man, who lives with a free will in the light of the Qur'anic teachings, are strongly connected to his own free will; because he is proceeding on a path which will lead him to happiness if followed properly, while deviation from it will put him in turmoil and distress. This, of course, concerns those subjects for which he has been granted free choice.

The Qur'an confirms this understanding. God says: *That is because Allah would never change a bounty which He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition* (8:53). Their pure intentions and good deeds have influence on the bounty which they have been blessed with; but when their intention is polluted with insincerity and actions tainted with evil, God changes their condition by withholding His mercy from them. He says: *And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and (yet) He pardons most (of your faults)* (42:30). Their actions have a hand in the calamities and misfortunes which befall them, although God pardons most of their misdeeds. Also God says: *Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself* (4:79).

However, you should not imagine that when God revealed this verse to His Prophet, He had forgotten the clear reality which has been stated in the verses which say: *Allah is the Creator of every thing…* (39:62); [God] *Who made good every thing that He has created…* (32:7). These verses clearly show that every thing has been created by God and is good in itself. And He says:*… and your Lord is not forgetful* (19:64); *…errs not my Lord, nor does He forget* (20:52). So, the verse *Whatever benefit comes to you…* (4:79) means that: The good which comes to you—and all that comes to you is good—is from God; and the misfortune which befalls you, it is misfortune for you because it does not agree with your aims and desires, although in itself it is good; you have brought it to yourself by your wrong choice and also you have asked God in the same manner. God is too great to initiate any evil, harm or misfortune for you.

As explained earlier, the verse is particularly addressed to the Prophet,

yet the meaning covers all human beings. In other words, this verse, like the other two (*That is because Allah would never change a bounty which He has conferred…* [8:53]; *And whatever affliction befalls you…* [42:30]) looks at social affairs as well as individual matters; the human society has its own existence, will and choice distinct from individual ones.

The society is a living entity in which the past generations and ancient people are dissolved [succeeded by coming generations]; in this way, the followers are held responsible for the evil deeds of their predecessors, the living bear the burden of the dead, and the innocent share in the punishment of the wrong-doers—while in the cases of the individuals it is never allowed. We have written about this subject in the second volume of this book in the Essay on the rules governing actions.[1]

Look at the Messenger of God in the battle of Uhud. He was inflicted with grievous wounds in the face and upper teeth, (and the Muslims too suffered great losses), and he was a sinless prophet. If we attribute this adversity to the society—because they had disobeyed the order given by God and His Messenger—it was a misfortune wrought by the society, and he was a part of that society. And if it is attributed to his august person, then it was a divinely ordained trial which befell him in the way of God and in course of his sacred divine mission, of which he had full insight and in that case it was rather a grace of God which raised his spiritual status and rank.

Likewise, whatever misfortune befalls a people is attributed to their actions from the Qur'anic point of view—and the Qur'anic view is but truth; and whatever bounty or benefit comes to them, it is from God.

Of course, there are many verses which attribute the benefits to men themselves to some extent. For example: *And if the people of the towns had believed and guarded (against evil), We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth…* (7:96); *And We made of them imāms to guide by Our command as they were patient and they were certain of Our signs* (32:24); *And We caused them to enter into Our mercy; surely they were of the good ones* (21:86).

But at the same time God says that nothing in His creation has power to reach its intended goal or to proceed to any good, except when God gives it such power and guides it to that goal; as He says: *"Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)"*

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.3, pp.251-73. (*tr.*)

(20:50);… *and were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure, but Allah purifies whom He pleases…* (24:21). These two verses in conjunction with the preceding ones show from another angle how the good comes from God, that is, the man does not possess any good unless God gives it into his possession; therefore all the good is from God and the evil is from the man himself. This further explains the verse: *Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself.*

To sum it up, all good comes from God, because every good thing is His creation and the creation is not separable from goodness; and all good is from Him, because it is good, and He is the owner of all good—others receive goodness only when He gives it into their possession. No harm, evil or misfortune is attributable to God, because evil, per se, is not created, and He is the Creator. So, what is misfortune? When God withholds His mercy from people because of what their hands have done, it is called misfortune, calamity or evil.

As for the good and evil in the meaning of obedience and disobedience, we have discussed about its attribution to God under the verse: *Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable…* (2:26), in volume one of this book.[1]

If you see what other exegetes have written on this subject, you will find a great many different views, a lot of conflicting opinions and various objections that will confound you. We hope that what we have written here will be enough for one who contemplates in the words of God. Be careful to keep various aspects of this topic separate from one other, ponder on the Qur'anic usage of the words, good and evil, bounty and punishment, and differentiate between the entities of society and individual, then you will understand this subject clearly.

Examining Narrations

(1) It is written in *al-Durr al-manthūr* under the verse, *Have you not seen those to whom it was said: "Withhold your hands…":* It is narrated by al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Hākim (who said that this tradition is 'correct') and al-Bayhaqī (in his *al-Sunan*) from ʿIkrimah from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said: ʿAbdu al-Rahmān b. ʿAwf and his group came to the Prophet and said: 'O Prophet of

1 *al-Mīzān,* (Eng.), vol.1, pp.131-5. (*tr.*)

God! We did have power when we were polytheists, but since we accepted the faith, we are humiliated.' The Prophet said: 'I have been ordered to forgive (them); therefore do not fight (these) people.' When God brought him to Medina, He ordered him to fight. But then they withheld (their hands). So, God sent down the verse, *Have you not seen those to whom it was said:…?*

(2) ᶜAbd b. Hamīd, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Qatādah that he said about this verse: "There were some companions of the Prophet who were in a hurry to wage war while they were at Mecca before *hijrah*. They said to the Prophet, 'Allow us to take (our) pickaxes in order to fight these polytheists.' And we have been told that ᶜAbdu al-Rahmān b. ᶜAwf was among those who had said it. But the Prophet forbade them to do so and said, 'I have not been ordered this.' When *hijrah* came and they were ordered to fight, those people disliked it, and did in this connection what you have heard. Then God said: Say*: 'The provision of this world is short, and the hereafter is better for him whoguard (against evil); and you shall not be wronged the husk of a date-stone*." (*ibid.*)

(3) Safwān b. Yahyā narrated from Abu al-Hasan that he said: "God, the High, has said: 'O son of Adam! By My will you have become such that you wish and say; and by My power you discharged the duties imposed by Me (on you); and by My bounty you got power to disobey Me. *Whatever benefit comes to you, it is from Allah; and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself.* And it is so because I have more rights on your good deeds than you have yourself; and you are more liable to your sins than Me. And it is because I cannot be questioned concerning what I do, and they shall be questioned.'" (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ᶜAyyāshī)

Author's comment: A slightly different version of this tradition has been quoted in volume one of this book under the verse: *Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable* (2:26), and we have discussed it there.[1]

(4) [al-Kulaynī has narrated] through his chains from ᶜAbdu al-Rahmān b. al-Hajāj that he said: "Trial and tribulation was mentioned near Abū ᶜAbdillāh, and how God reserves it for the believer. [The Imām] said: 'The Messenger of God was asked as

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng.), vol.1, p.143. (*tr.*)

to who was most severely put to trial in the world. He said: "The Prophets, then the closer to perfection, and then the closer; and the believer is put to test in promotion to his faith and the merit of his deeds; he whose belief is correct and his deeds good, his trial is harder, and he whose belief is feeble and his deeds weaker, his trial is lesser'". " (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: There is the famous tradition of the Prophet: "The world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the unbeliever."

(5) It is narrated through several chains from the fifth and the sixth Imāms: "Verily when God, the Mighty, the Great, loves a servant, He immerses him in tribulation through immersing." (*ibid.*)
al-Ṣādiq said: "The believer is but like the scale of a balance; the more his faith increases, the more his trouble increases." (*ibid.*)
al-Bāqir said: "Verily God takes care of a believer through trials as a man takes care of his family through gifts during (his) absence; and denies to him the world as a physician denies harmful food to a patient." (*ibid.*)
al-Ṣādiq said: "The Messenger of God has said: 'God does not need a servant in whose property and body there is no share for God.'"

(6) ʿAlī b. al-Husayn has narrated from his father (peace be on both) that he said: "The Messenger of God has said: 'If a believer were to live on a mountain, God, the Mighty, the Great, would surely send someone to him to annoy him, in order that He should give him [the believer] its reward.' " (*ʿIlal al-sharāiʾ*)

(7) al-Ṣādiq said: "Worries and griefs always remain with a believer until they wipe out his sins." (*Kitāb al-Tamhīs*)

(8) The same Imām said: "A believer does not pass forty nights without some thing sorrowful happening to him, which reminds his Lord to him." (*ibid.*)

(9) ʿAlī said: "Even if a mountain loved me it would break down." Also, he said: "He who loves us, the Ahl al-bayt, should prepare for himself a cover against tribulation." (*Nahj al-balāghah*)

Author's comment: Ibn Abil-Hadīd says in his Commentary of *Nahj al-balāghah*: "It is confirmed that the Prophet had said to him [ʿAlī]: 'No one will love you except a believer, nor will hate you except a hypocrite;' and also it is definitely known that the Prophet had said: 'Tribulation runs quicker to the believer than water to a downward slope.' These two

premises together lead us to the correct conclusion that even if a mountain were to love ʿAlī, it would break down."

You should know that there are so many traditions of this theme, and they support the Commentary written above.

(10) Ibn al-Mundhir and al-Khatīb have narrated from Ibn ʿUmar that he said: "We were with the Messenger of God together with a group of his companions. He said: 'O people! Don't you know that I am the Messenger of God sent to you?' They said: 'Certainly.' He (again) said: 'Don't you know that God has revealed in his Book that whoever obeys me, he obeys God' They said: 'Certainly. We bear witness that whoever obeys you, he obeys God, and that obeying you is a part of His obedience.' Then he said: 'So, it is a part of God's obedience that you should obey me; and it is a part of my obedience that you should obey your Imāms; if they pray in sitting position, you should pray in sitting position.' "

Author's comment: The last sentence shows that it is obligatory to follow them completely.

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Verses 81–84

The verses are not without some connection with the preceding ones. Apparently, they supplement the previous talk which had admonished the Muslims of weak faith. It aims at exhorting them in a manner that would open their eyes, if they pondered and reflected.

وَيَقُولُونَ طَاعَةٌ فَإِذَا بَرَزُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي
تَقُولُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُونَ ۖ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ
بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٨١﴾

(4:81) ***And they say: "Obedience." But when they go out from your presence, a party of them hatch by night a plan other than what you say; and Allah writes down what they hatch by night, therefore turn aside from them and trust in Allah, and Allah is sufficient as a protector***

Obedience is predicate of a deleted subject, as the scholars have said; and the full sentence is, 'Our business is obedience', that is, 'We obey you totally.' *al-Burūz* (to go out); *al-Tabyīt* (to hatch an evil plan by night); the phrase translated here as, *other than what you say,* may also be rendered as, other than what they say.

The verse says—and God knows better: When you call them to *jihād*, they say to you that they will obey you totally in all matters. But when they go out of your presence, they plan at night to do opposite of what they had told you or opposite of what you had told them. It is reflection on their determination to act against the orders of the Messenger of God. Then God tells His Messenger to turn aside from them and have trust in God, as He says: *therefore turn aside from them and trust in Allah, and Allah is sufficient as a protector.*

There is no proof that the verse speaks about the hypocrites, as some exegete have claimed; the continuation of the context shows that the talk is about the same believers of weaker faith mentioned above.

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا

كَثِيرًا ﴿٨٢﴾

(4:82) *Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy*

It is an exhortation in the form of 'question'. *al-Tadabbur* (translated here as meditation) literally means to take one thing after another. In this verse it may mean to ponder on one verse after another; or, to ponder on a verse repeatedly. However, as it aims at showing that there was no discrepancy in the Qur'an, and it naturally means looking at more than one verse, the former explanation (pondering on one verse after another) seems more appropriate, although the latter cannot be ruled out completely.

It is an exhortation for them to ponder on the Qur'anic verses. Whenever they want to look at a revealed order, an expanded wisdom, a story, an admonition or any other themes, they must look at all the relevant verses, of the Meccan period or Medinite, the decisive and the ambiguous ; then they should put them all together to realize that there was no discrepancy or contradiction at all. Rather it will be seen that the earlier verses verify the later ones, and each confirms the other without a trace of any imaginable discrepancy. There is no contradiction: nowhere a verse negates another, nor do they oppose one another. There is no disharmony: no two verses are asymmetrical in beauty of style or firmness of meanings and themes, because no part of it is weaker or less perfect than the other. It is a Book confirming in its various parts, oft-repeating, whereat do shudder the skins.

This total absence of discrepancy will make them believe that the Qur'an is a Book revealed by God, and no one else. If it were from someone else, it could not avoid a lot of discrepancy. Every thing found in this universe—and especially man, who the doubters allege, has written this Book—in its very existence and by its nature is founded on constant movement and change; is always in pursuit of perfection. Every single entity in this world in its life's journey passes through different stages and acquires varying dimensions.

It is hard to find a man who does not think that today he is wiser than he was yesterday. Everyone believes that the work he has done or the opinion he has formed lately is much better and reasonable than the one he had earlier. Even you ponder on a single but prolonged work, like

a book written, a poem composed or a lecture delivered, you will find that its last portion is better than the first, or that some parts excel the others in quality.

No man is free from discrepancy and difference in his work, or even in his own self; and it is not one or two differences or contradictions, but a lot. This is a common trend running throughout the world (including man) which is governed by the laws of gradual change and general advancement towards perfection. Nothing in this creation remains in one condition for two consecutive moments; its specificity and situation constantly change.

This shows the true significance of the word 'many' in *many a discrepancy*. It is an explanatory adjective, not a restrictive one. It says: If this Qur'an were from someone other than God, they would have found discrepancy in it, and those discrepancies would have been in a large quantity, because it is the intrinsic nature of every thing which emanates from other than God. In other words, the verse negates all discrepancies, whether a few or many; not that it denies only 'numerous discrepancies' leaving the door open for a few contradictions.

In short, a meditator on the Qur'an will at once realize that it is a book which deals with all the affairs related to humanity. It expounds the knowledge of genesis and resurrection; creation and existence; it explains the general human virtues, and lays down the social and personal laws which encompass the whole human species and guide them in all big and small affairs; then there are stories, lessons and sermons. And all this in such an excellent and succinct style that it challenged the whole world to bring its like. [Then, this book was not written all together in a short period;] it is made up of verses which were revealed piece-meal in a long period of twenty three years, in [different times and] various conditions: at night and in day time, in heat of war and tranquility of peace, in good days and bad, in hardship and ease; [but its excellence remained unaffected]. There never was any change in its miraculous and supernatural rhetorics, nor any discrepancy in its excellent knowledge and sublime wisdom, nor in its social and personal laws. Its later parts agree with what its earlier parts had established, and its details and branches are consistent with its roots and stems.

Analyze its laws and rules and you will find them firmly based on pristine monotheism; and that monotheism when looked *vis-à-vis* divinely gifted wisdom appears in the details of sharīʾah. So this is the Qur'an.

A man, pondering on it in this manner, is bound to admit—because

of his vital intelligence and natural discernment—that this book was not written by someone who was subject to change and gradual development which permeate the universe, nor was he affected by passage of time. This is nothing but the speech of God, the One, the Subduer.

The verse shows that the Qur'an is within the reach of the normal understanding; The Qur'an is a Book which is not liable to abrogation or nullification; it does not need any completion or refinement; no one has any authority to judge or control it. Because, it is subject to these things, naturally it will have to undergo change and alternation; but inasmuch as the Qur'an is free from discrepancy, it cannot admit any change or alternation. Consequently, it is not liable to abrogation, nullification, etc. It follows that the sharīʾah of Islam will continue up to the Day of Resurrection.

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ ۖ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٣﴾

(4:83) ***And when there comes to them news of security or fear, they spread it; and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who (can) draw out the truth in it would have known it, and were it not for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have certainly followed the Satan, save a few.***

al-Idhāʾah (to publish, to spread, to announce). The verse contains a sort of condemnation and reproach to them for this rumor-mongering. The following sentence, *and were it not for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have certainly followed the Satan, save a few,* clearly shows that the believers were in danger of going astray because of this adverse propaganda. The danger was of disobeying the Prophet; because this is the theme of these verses. This view is supported by the next verse where the Prophet is ordered to fight the disbelievers even if he remained alone without any helper.

All this together proves that the "news of security or fear" refers to the false rumors which the disbelievers' agents used to bring to Medina for creating disharmony and discord among the believers; and the believers of weaker faith spread it without thinking over it. This in its turn caused

loss of courage and vigor in the believers. However, God saved them from following those Satans who had brought such news for discouraging the believers.

These verses fit completely on the events of the Lesser Badr,[1] which was described in the chapter of "The House of ʿImrān". The verses agree in theme with those in that chapter, as will be clear on meditation. God says there: *(As for) those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger (even) after the wound had afflicted them, those among them who do good (to others) and guard (against evil) shall have a great reward. Those to who the people said: "Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them"; but this (only) increased their faith, and they said: "Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent Protector is (He)". So they returned with favor from Allah and (His) grace; no evil touched them and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of the mighty grace. That is only the Satan that frightens his friends; so do not fear them, and fear Me if you are Believers* (3:172–5).

As you see, these verses describe how the Messenger of God was calling the people, "after the wound had afflicted them" in the calamity of Uhud, to come with him to meet the disbelievers, and how some people were demoralizing the believers, trying to turn them away from the Prophet and frightening them that the polytheists were gathered together against the believers. Then, the verses assert that all this was a plan of the Satan who spoke through his friends; and exhort the believers not to fear the Satan and his friends; rather they should fear God if they were believers.

Ponder on these verses and then again on the verses under discussion (*And when there comes to them news of security or fear…*). You will find no room for doubt that the verses under discussion too describe the same episode of the Lesser Badr. The Qur'an includes that episode in the list of the behaviors for which it blames the believers of the weaker faith. For example: *but when fighting was prescribed for them… ; "Our Lord! Why hast Thou ordained fighting for us"… and if a benefit comes to them; And they say: "Obedience"*. And then it goes on to say in the same tone: "And when there comes to them news of security or fear, they spread it."

…and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who (can) draw out the truth of it,

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng.), vol.7, pp.110-13 (*tr.*).

would have known it: Here they are not required to refer it to God as was done in the preceding verse 59: *then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the last day.* It is because in that verse the talk was about a disputed legislative order; and no one has any authority in that field except God and His Messenger. But in the verse under discussion they are told to refer a news of security or fear, and such a news cannot be referred to God and His book; the people who could decide about it were the Messenger and those in authority among them. If the news were referred to them they could find out its reality and explain to the believers whether it was true or false, right or wrong.

The knowledge [in "would have known"] means distinguishing truth from falsehood and right from wrong; it is the same connotation as is found in the verses: *that Allah might know who fears Him in secret* (5:94); *And most certainly Allah will know those who believe, and most certainly He will know the hypocrites* (29:11).

Istinbāt (to draw out a talk from ambiguity to distinctness and knowledge); it is derived from *al-nabt* (to gush out, to stream forth). The phrase, "those among them who (can) draw out the truth of it", may point to the Messenger of God and those in authority; that they may investigate the matter and find out the truth. Or, it may point to those who are required to refer it to the Messenger and the people of authority; in that case, it would mean that the believers would know the truth as shown by the Messenger of God and those in authority.

According to the former interpretation (which is the obvious meaning of the verse), the verse says that the Messenger and the people of authority will distinguish the truth if they draw out the reality, that is, if they think that doing so is in the interest of the religion and society. According to the second interpretation, it will mean: Those believers who ask and are eager to know the truth of the matter will know it [from the Messenger and the people of authority].

The phrase, *ulu al-amr* (those vested with authority; those in authority) has the same connotations in the preceding verse 59: *O you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you*. As described there, the exegetes have differed much in the explanation of this phrase; however mainly there are five interpretations. The meaning which we have mentioned here is more obvious from this verse [as is explained below].

The view that *ulu al-amr* means the leaders of the fighting detachments

is not relevant here. Those leaders had no authority except over a particular band of fighters in a particular combat; they had no knowledge or authority beyond that. But the verse here talks about something much bigger and more important: Disturbance of security, spreading of fear and general fright which the polytheists caused by infiltrating spies and secret agents who spread rumors to demoralize the believers. What concern the leaders of fighting bands had with such matters? How could they explain the truth or otherwise of such news if the people referred it to them?

The opinion that *ulu al-amr* means scholars is equally irrelevant. The scholars—and in that era they were the narrators of traditions, jurisprudents, reciters of Qur'an and theologians—had expertise in tradition, jurisprudence, etc. But this verse speaks about matters of security and general feeling of terror; it is concerned with such news which was deeply connected with political affairs, which if ignored or wrongly handled could disturb the Muslims' lives and result in such sociological calamities which no reformer could ever put right. It could nullify the nation's endeavours in the path of its felicity; or could rob them of their supremacy and make them prey of humiliation and degradation, or leave them to be killed or imprisoned. What expertise did the scholars—in their capacity as narrators of traditions, experts of jurisprudence or reciters of Qur'an and so on—have in these matters, that God would order the people to refer such news to them? How could they solve such problems in the political arena?

The opinion that it refers to the 'rightly guided' caliphs (Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿAlī) is more baseless. First of all, there is no proof for it in the Book of God or a definitely accepted tradition. Secondly, we have a right to ask: Was the order given in this verse limited to the time of the Prophet? Or, was it general—for his time as well as after him? If it was meant for his time only, then the four personalities should have been known as the people of authority to all the people and particularly to the Companions of the Prophet; but the history and traditions do not record any such especial status for them at all. In case it was valid for the post-Prophetic era too, then its validity was bound to expire after those four caliphs had passed away. If so, then the verse should have contained some indication to that effect as is the case with other verses which announce some especial rules for the Prophet; but the verse does not hint at any such limitation.

The interpretation of *ulu al-amr* as the people who 'tie and open', the influential persons, is equally out of place. Such exegetes know that there

was no group, in the days of the Prophet, known as *ahl al-halli wa al-ʾaqd*, like other civilized societies which do have well-defined committees and councils, e.g. cabinet of ministers, delegations sent to conferences, etc. At that time the only rule implemented in the *ummah* was of God and His Messenger. This difficulty compelled him to say that *ulu al-amr* were those Companions whose advice was sought and whom the Prophet consulted.

But, the fact remains that the Prophet included in his consultations not only the believers but even hypocrites like ʿAbdullāh b. Abī and his band. The story of his consultation in the battle of Uhud is well-known. How can God order the believers to refer such sensitive news to such people?

Moreover, no one denies that ʿAbdu al-Rahmān b. ʿAwf was among those who had this status in the life of the Prophet and even after him. And these verses, which admonish the believers of weaker faith and put them to shame for what they had done, have begun with exposing him and his group in these words: *Have you not seen those to whom it was said: "Withhold your hands…"* This tradition has been narrated by al-Nasāī (in his *Sahīh*), al-Hākim (in his *al-Mustadrak*, declaring that it is a correct tradition) and al-Tabarī and others in their books of *tafsīr*. And the said traditions have been given under "Traditions" under the preceding verses. Keeping this in view, how can one say that the believers were ordered to refer this matter to such people?

Now, remains only the fifth interpretation which we had preferred under the verse: *obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you…* (4:59). [That is: The *ulu al-amr* are the Twelve sinless successors of the Holy Prophet]

…and were it not for the grace of Allah upon you and his mercy, you would have certainly followed the Satan save a few: As stated earlier, the verses apparently point to the events of the Lesser Badr when Abū Sufyān had sent Naʾīm b. Masʾūd al-Ashjaʾī to Medina to spread fear and fright among the people in order that they should not go forth to Badr. Hence, following of Satan means acceptance of the said news and failure to go to Badr.

In that case, the exception, "save a few", is quite in place; there is no need to strive artfully and stretch its meaning. Naʾīm had informed the Muslims that Abū Sufyān had gathered many groups and readied a huge armies; therefore the Muslims should not go out to fight against them, otherwise they (the Muslims) would be annihilated. This rumor demoralized the people and they offered many excuses for not going to Badr. Only

the Prophet and a few persons nearest to him remained steadfast, and it is they who are mentioned in the exception phrase, "save a few". Most of the people had wavered and tried to avoid going out, except a few steadfast ones; then some more joined them and the group proceeded out.

This interpretation of the exception clause is supported by the earlier-mentioned context and association, and the meaning is quite clear.

The exegetes have, however, interpreted this clause in various artful ways, none of them free from distortion or misrepresentation. For example:

(1) The grace and mercy of God points to the divine guidance which led them to the obedience of God, His Messenger and those in authority; and the excepted 'few' refers to the good-natured pure-hearted believers. Thus, the verse means: If God had not guided you to the obedience by ordering you to refer the matter to those in authority, you would certainly have followed the Satan by falling into error and going astray, except a few good-natured believers among you who would not have deviated from truth and goodness.

Comment: This interpretation confines the divine grace and mercy to a certain order while there is no reason for such restriction. It is not in keeping with the Qur'anic style. Moreover, the verse apparently describes God's favor for something which had already passed and was completed.

(2) The verse means what it apparently says. The believers of weaker faith need extra grace and mercy from God, although the sincere ones too cannot manage without divine care.

Comment: If it is its apparent meaning, then the Qur'an, in its sublime literary style, must have rebutted it here and now. But it has not. God says: *and were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure* (24:21); and He says to His Prophet who was the best of the human beings: *And had it not been that We had already established you, you would certainly have been near to incline to them a little; in that case We would certainly have made you to taste a double (punishment) in this life and a double (punishment) after death* (17:74–75).

(3) The divine grace and mercy means the Qur'an and the Prophet. It means the victory. The exception then is perfectly in place; because the majority stands firm on truth only when their hearts are happy as a result of victory and similar [worldly] benefits, which prove to them that God cares for them. Otherwise, if they were to taste bitter truth, then only a few believers would submit to it, that is, those only who might be having

deep insight of the religion.

The exception, "save a few", is related to the verb, "they spread it".

No. It is related to the verb, "who (can) draw out the truth of it". The exception is in word only; it actually has the connotation of comprehensiveness. Thus the verse actually means, 'and were it not for the divine grace and mercy, all of you would have certainly followed the Satan'. It is not unlike the verse: *We will make you recite so you shall not forget, except what Allah pleases* (87:6–7). Because in this case too, the exception emphasizes the comprehensiveness of "not forgetting".

Comment: All these explanations are merely literary affectionand trickery.

فَقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ إِلَّا نَفْسَكَ ۚ وَحَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَكُفَّ بَأْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَشَدُّ بَأْسًا وَأَشَدُّ تَنْكِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

(4:84) ***Fight then in Allah's way; this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself, and rouse the believers to ardor; maybe Allah will restrain the fighting of those who disbelieve, and Allah is strongest in prowess and strongest to give an exemplary punishment***

al-Taklīf is derived from *al-kulfah* (discomfort, hardship) and means imposition of duty and responsibility, because the person concerned undergoes hardship in discharging his duties. *al-Tankīl* is derived from *al-nakāl* (exemplary punishment). According to *Majmaʾ al-bayān*, it means: a punishment which discourages the guilty from committing that error again and makes him into a lesson to others; in short, a punishment, the fear of which prevents people from doing such mischief in future.

"*Fa*" (then, so) in "Fight then in God's way" signifies that the order to fight, [even alone, if necessary] is based on the sum-total of the preceding verses, that is, the people's apathy and lethargy in going forth to face the enemy. It is clearly reflected in the sentences that follow: "this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself… " The meaning, therefore, is as follows: As they are lethargic concerning *jihād* and are unwilling to fight, then you, O Messenger of God! should fight the unbelievers on your own; do not be disheartened because of their apathy and disobedience of the divine command; you will no be asked about their obligation, you are responsible only for your own duties. As for the others, your only

responsibility is to exhort and rouse them to fight. Therefore, you go forth for fighting and at the same time rouse the believers to ardor. May be, in this way God will prevent the unbelievers from fighting. The sentence, "this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself", actually means, 'except concerning your own deed'. In other words, there is in this excepted clause a deleted first construct of possessive case.

"maybe Allah will restrain…": It was mentioned that *ʿasā* (maybe) expressed hope. That hope can be found in the mind of the speaker, or the addressee, or it may arise because of the situation. As such, there is no need to assert that 'may be', when used by God, denotes certainty.

Through this verse, God further reviles those people who showed apathy towards *jihād* until God ordered His Prophet to go forth for fighting alone; and told him to turn aside from those sluggish people. He should not exhort them to answer the call for *jihād*; rather he should leave them alone. He should not be discouraged by their behavior. His only responsibility is in relation to his own self; apart from that, he should rouse the believers to ardor—and then let him who wants to answer the call, and him who wants to disobey God and His Prophet.

Examining Narrations

(1) [al-Kulaynī narrates] through his chains from Muhammad b. ʿAjlān that he said: "I heard Abū ʿAbdillāh saying: 'God had put some people to shame because of their spreading [rumors], as He, the Mighty, the Great, says: *And when there comes to them news of security or fear, they spread it*. Therefore, take care not to spread [rumors].' " (*al-Kāfī*)

(2) Also he narrates from ʿAbdul-Hamīd b. Abid-Daylam from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: "God, the Mighty, the Great, has said: *Obey Allah and the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you*; also He has said: *and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who (can) draw out the truth in it would have known it.* Thus He has returned the people to *ulu al-amr* from among them, ordering them (the people) to obey them (*ulu al-amr*) and refer all affairs to them." (*ibid.*)

Author's Comments: This *hadīth* supports the explanation given by us that *ulu al-amr* in this verse refers to the same Imāms who were mentioned in the 59th verse (of this chapter).

(3) ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAjlān narrates from Abū Jaᶜfar about the words of God: *and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them*, that he (the Imām) said: "They are the Imāms." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ᶜAyyāshī)

Author's Comments: This meaning has also been narrated from ᶜAbdullāh b. Jundab from al-Ridā in a letter which the Imām had written about the al-Wāqifiyyah. The same meaning is narrated by al-Mufīd in *al-Ikhtisās* from Isḥāq b. ᶜAmmār from al-Ṣādiq, *inter alia*, in a long tradition.

(4) Muhammad b. al-Fudayl narrates from Abu al-Hasan about the word of God: *and were it not for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy*, that [the Imām] said: "Grace is the Messenger of God and His mercy is the Commander of the Believers." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ᶜAyyāshī)

(5) Zurārah has narrated from Abū Jaᶜfar, and Humrān from Abū ᶜAbdillāh, that they said: "God's grace is His Messenger and His mercy is *al-wilāyah* (love and obedience) of the Imāms." (*ibid.*)

(6) Muhammad b. al-Fudayl narrates from al-ᶜAbdu al-Sālih [the 7th Imām] that he said: "The mercy is the Messenger of God and the grace, ᶜAlī b. Abī Tālib." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: These traditions are based on the flow of the Qur'an; and they explain the divine grace and mercy in terms of messengership and imāmat. These are the two connected ropes with which God has rescued us from the pit of straying and the trap of the Satan. One of them is the source of bringing the Truth, while the other is the means of keeping it alive. The last tradition is more in keeping with the Qur'anic point of view, because God has named His Messenger 'Mercy', as He says in His book: *And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the world* (21:107).

(7) ᶜAlī b. Hadīd narrates through Murāzim from Abū ᶜAbdillāh that he said: "God imposed a duty on the Messenger of God which He had not imposed on anyone before him; then he imposed on him to go forth all alone against all the people, even if he did not find any group to stand by him; and He had not obliged anyone before or after him to do so." Then he recited this verse: *Fight then in Allah's way; this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself.* Then the Imām said: "And God granted him to take for himself what God has taken for himself. Thus God, the Mighty, the Great, says: *Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like*

it."[1] And likewise He has made *Salawāt* for the Messenger of God (equal to) ten good deeds." (*al-Kāfī*)

(8) Sulaymān b. Khālid says: "I informed Abū ʿAbdillāh about what the people said concerning ʿAlī: 'If he had any right then what prevented him from standing up for it' (The Imām) said: 'Verily God has not imposed such duty to anyone except the Messenger of God as He says: *Fight then in Allah's way; this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself, and rouse the believers to ardor*. So, this is not except for the Messenger; and He has said about the others: [*And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day*] *unless he turns aside for the sake of fighting or withdraws to a company*[2]; and at that time there was no group to support him (ʿAlī) in his affair." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(9) Zayd al-Shahhām narrates from Jaʾfar b. Muhammad (peace be on both) that he said: "The Messenger of God never said 'No' when he was asked for anything. If he had it, he gave it; if he did not have it, he said: 'It will be if God so wishes'; and he never took revenge of any evil (done to him); and he never met any expedition but he himself was on head of it—ever since the verse was revealed to him: *Fight then in Allah's way; this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself. (ibid.)*

Author's comment: There are other traditions too of the same meaning.

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1 *Qur'ān*, 6:160 (*tr.*)

2 *Qur'ān*, 8:16 (*tr.*)

Verses 85–91

The verses are connected with the preceding ones, as these are concerned with the order of fighting against a particular group of polytheists—the double-faced among them. On meditation it is seen that they were revealed about some polytheists who claimed to accept Islam in presence of the believers, and then they returned to their homes and joined the polytheists in disbelief. [When a chance came to fight them], the believers were divided; one group said that they should be fought against, while the other opposed it and interceded for them because they had accepted Islam. But God offers them only two alternatives: they should [leave their original place and] migrate to Medina otherwise they should be struck at. Then He warns the believers against interceding for such people.

Such people will be repeatedly followed by others like them; all of them will be required to offer peace to the Muslims; if they fail to do so, they should be fought. This is the main theme, for which the ground is paved by describing the condition of intercession in one verse, and offering of greetings in another, as it is relevant to offering of peace.

مَنْ يَشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ نَصِيبٌ مِنْهَا ۖ وَمَنْ يَشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ كِفْلٌ مِنْهَا ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُقِيتًا ﴿٨٥﴾

(4:85) ***Whoever intercedes a good intercession shall have a share of it, and whoever intercedes a bad intercession shall have the responsibility of it; and Allah controls all things.***

al-Nasīb and *al-kifl* both have the same meaning, that is, share [although we have translated the latter as 'responsibility']. Intercession is a sort of mediation aimed at making up a deficiency or gaining a benefit out the desire defect. Therefore, it cannot escape its responsibility, and will have to share the blame or reward of the thing interceded for. The interceder will have his share of good or evil resulting from the intercession. That is why God says: *Whoever intercedes… shall have the responsibility of it*.

By mentioning this reality, God reminds the believers and warns them

to be careful when interceding for someone. They should refrain if the subject of intercession was undesirable and likely to cause evil and mischief. For example, some believers had interceded on behalf of the double-faced polytheists that they should not be attacked. Those intercessors should have realized that if a small evil is left unopposed and allowed to grow and spread, it would result in such a great evil that no one would be able to stand against it and it would destroy the tilth and the stock. The verse therefore contains a prohibition of bad intercession, that is, intercession of those indulging in oppression and transgression, hypocrisy and polytheism—in short for those who create mischief on the earth.

وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا ﴿٨٦﴾

(4:86) ***And when you are greeted with greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it; surely Allah takes account of all things.***

A greeting should be returned with a better or a similar greeting. It is a general order covering all greetings; but in this context it is applicable to the greeting of peace which might be addressed to the Muslims, as the following verses show.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۗ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا ﴿٨٧﴾

(4:87) ***Allah, there is no god but He—He will most certainly gather you together on the Resurrection Day, there is no doubt in it; and who is more true in word than Allah?***

Its meaning is clear. It gives a sort of reason to the orders given in the preceding two verses: Adhere to the order given to you regarding good and bad intercession; and do not ignore the greetings offered to you, by turning aside or rejecting it; because a day is sure to come when God will gather you all and reward or punish you for acceptance or rejection of His commandments.

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِئَتَيْنِ وَاللَّهُ أَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا ۚ أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ

تَهْدُوا مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ ۖ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٨﴾

(4:88) ***What is the matter with you, then, that you have become two parties about the hypocrites, while Allah has made them return (to unbelief) for what they have earned? Do you wish to guide him whom Allah has forsaken to stray? And whomsoever Allah forsakes to stray, you shall by no means find a way for him.***

al-Fiʾah (group, party); *al-irkās* (to return). The theme shows that the verse in a way branches out from the preceding one which had paved the way for it, that is, *Whoever intercedes a good intercession…* The meaning will be as follows: As a bad intercession makes the interceder share in its bad effects, then what has happened to you, O believers, that you have become divided into two groups regarding the double-faced polytheists? Why are you disputing among yourselves? One party says that those polytheists should be fought against, while the other intercedes for them and exhorts the believers not to fight. This latter group wants you to leave the tree of mischief alone; not realizing that the tree will go on growing with the polytheists' growth, and will bear fruit when those polytheists become stronger. The fact remains that God has let them return to straying after they had got out of it; it was done as a punishment for what they had earned of evil deeds. Do you want—through your intercession—to guide those whom God has left to go astray? But whosoever is left by God to go astray, cannot get to the path of guidance.

The sentence, *And whomsoever Allah forsakes to stray, you* [2nd person singular] *shall by no means find a way for him*, is addressed directly to the Prophet, instead of the believers; it is intended to show that those Muslims who had interceded on behalf of the double-faced polytheists were not capable of understanding this speech properly; otherwise, they would not have interceded. That is why God has turned away from them and addressed the Prophet, who had true and clear knowledge of these realities.

وَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ كَمَا كَفَرُوا فَتَكُونُونَ سَوَاءً ۖ فَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٨٩﴾

(4:89) ***They desire that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved, so that you might be (all) alike; therefore take not friends from among them until they migrate in Allah's way; but if they turn back, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take not from among them a friend or a helper.***

It is a further explanation of the words, *while Allah has made them return (to disbelief) for what they have earned? Do you wish to guide him whom Allah has forsaken to stray?* The meaning: They disbelieved, and then went further in disbelief, until now they wish you to join them in their disbelief, so that you too might become like them. Then God forbids the Muslims to take friends from among them except when they leave their homes and migrate in the way of God. If they fail to do so, then your only duty towards them is to seize them and kill them wherever they are found; the believers must refrain from befriending them or seeking their help. The clause, "but if they turn back", indicates that the believers must ask them to migrate; if they migrated then they should be taken as friends, otherwise they are to be killed.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ أَوْ جَاءُوكُمْ حَصِرَتْ
صُدُورُهُمْ أَنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ أَوْ يُقَاتِلُوا قَوْمَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ
عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقَاتَلُوكُمْ ۚ فَإِنِ اعْتَزَلُوكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ
فَمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٠﴾

(4:90) ***Except those who reach a people between whom and you there is a covenant, or who come to you, their hearts shrinking from fighting you or fighting their own people; and if Allah had pleased, He would have given them power over you, so that they would have certainly fought you; therefore if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not made for you a way against them***

God has excepted two groups from the above order (*if they turn back then seize them and kill them wherever you find them*). One: Those who reach a people who have made a covenant with the Muslims. Two: Those disbelievers who find themselves in a dilemma; they do not like to fight the Muslims, nor do they relish the idea of fighting against their own

people. Thus they withdraw from the believers and offer them peace; they are neither with the believers nor against them. These two groups are excepted from the above order.

سَتَجِدُونَ آخَرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَأْمَنُوكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كُلَّ مَا رُدُّوا إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكِسُوا فِيهَا ۚ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَعْتَزِلُوكُمْ وَيُلْقُوا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ وَيَكُفُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَخُذُوهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا ﴿٩١﴾

(4:91) ***Shortly you will find others who desire that they should be safe from and secure from their own people; as often as they are sent back to the mischief they get thrown into it headlong; therefore if they do not withdraw from you, and (do not) offer you peace and restrain their hands, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them; and against these We have given you a clear authority***

It is a forecast that shortly you will face another group, like the second excepted one. They will try to be safe from you as well as from their own people. But God tells the believers that those people are hypocrites; no trust should be put in their covenants or their offer of peace. That is why God has changed the two positive conditions imposed on the former group (*if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offer you peace*) with the negative conditions for this latter one: *if they do not withdraw from you, and (do not) offer you peace and restrain their hands*. It is a sort of warning that the believers should remain on guard against them. The meaning is clear.

Discourse on Greetings

The peoples and nations, civilized and uncivilized, developed and less developed, all have their own ways of greetings used when one person meets another; these greetings take various forms: there is nodding of head or bowing it, raising hand in various ways, removing the hat and many similar gestures. It all depends on different factors active in the society, concerned.

Look at different forms of greetings found in various societies, and you will find that all of them demonstrate a sort of submission, self-abasement and degradation, offered by a lowly person to an august personality, by a

plebeian to a high-bred, by an obedient follower to the one in authority, by a slave to his master. In short, all these customs are relics of the slavery system which has prevailed throughout the world from the early primitive ages in one form or the other. That is why these greetings are always offered by a follower to his leader, and a subordinate to his superior. This, in short, is a result of idolatry nurtured by the system of slavery.

As you know, the most important aim of Islam is to erase idolatry and every rite resulting from or based on it. That is why Islam has initiated a system of greeting free from such defects, in contrast to the relics of idol-worship and slavery. The Islamic greeting offers peace to the greeted one. It offers him safety from transgression against his rights, and assures him that he has nothing to fear from the greeter concerning his natural freedom bestowed on him by the Creator. Obviously, it is the first requirement of a social order based on mutual cooperation that the individual members should feel secure and safe from one another as far as their lives, honor and properties are concerned. Every social trouble emanates from one of these three factors.

This is the *al-Salām* (peace, greeting) which God has prescribed for the people when they meet each other. He says: *So when you enter houses greet your people with a salutation from Allah blessed (and) goodly* (24:61); *O you who believe! do not enter houses other than your own houses until you have asked permission and saluted their inmates; this is better for you, that you may be mindful* (24:27). God has taught His Messenger to greet the believers—although he is their Chief: *And when those who believe in Our signs come to you, say: "Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself,… "'* (6:54); and also ordered him to offer peace to the others: *So turn away from them and say, "Peace!" For they shall soon come to know* (43:89).

Greeting, by offering 'peace', was common in pre-Islamic Arabia, as is seen in the poetry and other forms of literature transmitted from them. *Lisan al-ʾArab* says: "The Arabs in pre-Islamic days greeted each other in various ways: one said to one's companion: 'Good morning to you', and 'You be safe from disdain'; also it was said: 'Peace be on you'; in a way it was a symbol of mutual peace and a declaration that there was to be no fighting between them: Then God sent Islam to them and they were told to use only the 'Peace' formula for greeting, and ordered to say it loudly."

At the same time, God mentions it several times in the stories of Abraham. It provides an evidence that this was, like *hajj*, etc., a relic of

the pure religion of Abraham among the Arabs. God describes him as saying to his father [that is, uncle]: *He said:"Peace be on you! I will pray to my Lord to forgive you;…"* (19:47). Also He says: *And certainly Our messengers came to Abraham with good news. They said: "Peace!" " Peace," said he…* (11 :69). This story is narrated in more than one place in the Qur'an.

God has taken it as His own greeting and used it in various places in His book: *Peace be on Noah in all the worlds* (37:79); *Peace be on Abraham* (37:109); *Peace be on Moses and Aaron* (37:120); *Peace be on Ilyāsīn* (37:130); *And peace be on the messengers* (37:181).

Then God says that it is the greeting of the honored angels: *Those whom the angels cause to die in a good state, saying: "Peace be on you!…"* (16:32);… *and the angels will enter in upon them from every gate: "Peace be on you,"* (13:23–24) And the same will be the greeting of the people of the Garden: *and their greeting in it shall be: "Peace,"…* (10:10); *They shall not hear therein vain or sinful discourse except the word: "Peace, peace!"* (56:25–26).

Examining Narrations

(1) It is written in *Majmaʾ al-bayān* under the verse, *And when you are greeted… :* ʿAlī b. Abraham has narrated in his *al-Tafsīr* from the two Truthful ones [the 5th and the 6th Imāms] "In this verse, greeting means 'Peace' and other [acts of] kindness."

(2) [al-Kulaynī narrates] through his chains from al-Sakūnī that he said: "The Messenger of God has said: 'To offer (greeting of) peace is an [act of] voluntary righteousness, and to give its reply is obligatory.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

(3) Jarrāh al-Madāinī narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: "A younger should offer greeting to an elder; a walker to the sitter and a small group to the bigger one." (*ibid.*)

(4) ʿUyaynah[1] narrates through Musʾab from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: "A small group should begin salutation to the bigger one; a rider to the walker; riders of mules to the riders of donkeys and the riders of horses to the riders of mules. (*ibid.*)

(5) Ibn Bakīr narrates from one of his fellows from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he heard him saying: "The rider salutes the walker, and the walker (salutes) the sitter; and when [two] groups meet, the smaller one

1 ʿAnbasah

salutes the bigger one; and when one person meets a group, he will offer greeting to the group." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: A nearly similar tradition has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from al-Bayhaqī from Zayd b. Aslam from the Prophet.

(6) Abū ʿAbdillāh said: "When a group passes by [another] group, it is enough if one of them offers greeting; and if greeting was offered to a group then it is sufficient if one of them replies." (*al-Kāfī*) al-Shaykh narrates through his chains from Muhammad b. Muslim that he said: "I visited Abū Jaʾfar and he was praying; so I said: 'Peace be on you;' he said: 'Peace be on you; ' then I said; 'How do you do?' But he [the Imām] remained silent [that is, did not reply]. When he finished the prayer, I said: 'Should one reply to the salutation when one is praying?' He said: 'Yes, in the same words he was saluted with.'" (*al-Tahdhīb*)

(7) Mansūr b. Hāzim narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: "When a man salutes you and you are praying, you will return [the same words] as he had used (but) in a low voice." (*ibid.*)

(8) al-Sadūq narrates through his chains from Masʾadah b. Sadaqah from Jaʾfar b. Muhammad from his father (peace be on both) that he said: "Do not greet the Jews, nor the Christians, nor the Fire-worshippers, nor the idol-worshippers; (greet) neither (those who are sitting) on tables where liquor is being used, nor on the people (playing) chess and backgammon; (salute) not an effeminate person, nor a poet who slanders married women; (you should) not greet one who is praying because he is unable to return (your) greeting (inasmuch as greeting a Muslim is a voluntary good act while to return it is obligatory); (likewise, do not greet) an interest-eater, nor a man sitting for evacuating the bowels, nor a person who is in Turkish bath, nor a sinful person who manifests his sins." (*Man lā yahduruhu al-faqīh*)

Author's comment: There are numerous traditions of the above-quoted themes. The preceding commentary sufficiently explains the traditions. 'Peace' as a greeting announces that there is peace, security and safety extended between the two parties on the basis of equality and balance, and that neither wants to overpower the other. Of course, the traditions guide that a younger should salute his elder; a smaller group or a single man should greet a larger group; but it is not against the principle of equality; it only shows that everyone is bound to respect the others'

rights. Islam does not want people to neglect others' rights, or ignore the virtues and excellent found in others. On the contrary, it has ordered its followers to pay respects to those who are more virtuous, and to recognize the rights of the right-holders. At the same time Islam does not allow a virtuous person to be proud of his virtues or to think himself as superior to others, or to transgress the limit by showing arrogance or haughtiness against fellow human beings. Because, such behavior would disturb the balance between various sections of the society.

The prohibition of saluting some groups is based on the Qur'anic injunction against befriending them or inclining towards them. God says: *do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends* (5:51); *do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends* (60:1); *and do not incline to those who are unjust* (11 :113) .

Of course, some times it appears in the interest of Islam to go near some unjust people with an aim to convey the message of religion or to make them hear the word of truth; and then it becomes necessary to greet them in order to establish good rapport with them. For instance, God has told the Prophet: *So turn away from them* [the unbelievers] *and say, "Peace!"* (43:89). Also, He praises the believers in these words: *and when the ignorant address them, they say: "Peace."* (25:63).

(9) It is narrated that a man said to the Prophet: "Peace be on you." He (the Prophet) said: "And on you be peace and mercy of God." Then another man said: "Peace be on you and mercy of God'; and (the Prophet) said: 'And on you be peace and mercy of God and His blessings." Then a (third) man said: "Peace be on you and mercy of God and His blessings"; and (the Prophet) said: "And on you?" That man said: "You decreased me (i.e. shortened the reply to my greeting); then where is the word of God: *And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better* (greeting) *than it.* The Prophet said: 'You did not leave for me anything to add, so I returned to you the like of it.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Sāfī)

Author's comment: A similar tradition has been narrated in *al- Durr al-manthūr* from Ahmad (in *al-Zuhd*), Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Tabarānī and Ibn Marduwayh through good chain from Salmān al-Fārisī.

(10) al-Bāqir said: "The Commander of the Believers passed by a group and greeted them. They said: 'On you be peace and mercy of God and His blessings and His pardon and His pleasure.' The

Commander of the Believers said to them: 'Do not take us beyond that which the angels had said to our father, Abraham; they had said: *The mercy of Allah and His blessings be on you, O people of the house* (11:73)'" (*al-Kāfī*).

Author's comment: It indicates that the sunnah in complete greeting (that is, the words of the greeter, 'Peace be on you and the mercy of God and His blessings') is taken from the pure religion of Abraham, and it supports what we have written earlier that the greeting with 'Peace' is a part of the religion of Abraham.

(11) al-Ṣādiq said: "The completion of greeting for a resident is to shake hands, and completion of salutation for a traveller is to embrace." (*ibid.*)

(12) The Leader of the Faithful said: "When one of you sneezes, say: 'May God have mercy on you', and he should reply: 'May God forgive you and have mercy on you.' God, the Sublime, says: *And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with better (greeting) than it…* " (*al-Khisāl*)

(13) "A maid brought a bouquet of flowers to al-Hasan. He said to her: 'You are freed for the sake of God. 'Someone told him something about it. He said: 'God, the High, has taught us manners and said: *And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it…* And better than it (flower bouquet) was her emancipation.'" (*al-Manāqib*)

Author's Comments: As you see, these traditions extend the meaning of 'greeting' in this verse.

(14) It is written in *Majmaʾ al-bayān*, under the verse: *What is the matter with you, then, that you have become two parties…* ; that commentators differed in opinion as about whom this verse was revealed. It is said that it was revealed about a group who came to Medina from Mecca and pretended before the Muslims that they were believers. Then they returned to Mecca claiming that Medina's [climate] was unhealthy; and at Mecca they showed polytheism. Later they travelled with the merchandise of the polytheists to Yamāmah. The Muslims wanted to fight them, but then they differed among themselves. Some said: "We should not do so because they are believers." Others said: "They are polytheists." Therefore, God revealed this verse. al-Tabrisī says that it has been narrated from Abū Jaʾfar .

(15) It is narrated in *al-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī under the verse: *They desire that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved…* : "It was revealed about two tribes, the Ashjaʾ and Banū Damrah. It happened that when the Messenger of God proceeded to Hudaybiyyah, he passed by their places. The Messenger of God had concluded a truce with Banū Damrah and made an agreement with them. The companions of the Messenger of God said: 'O Messenger of God: Here are Banū Damrah nearer to us, and we are afraid they might attack Medina violating [our agreement,] or help the Quraysh against us; so [it would be prudent] if we begin with them.' The Messenger of God said: 'Never. Surely they are the most dutiful of Arabs towards parents, the best to join relationships and the strictest in keeping a promise among them.' The place of the Ashjaʾ was nearer to that of Banū Damrah—and they were a clan of Kinānah. There was an alliance between the Ashjaʾ and Banū Damrah for mutual care and security. There came drought in the area of the Ashjaʾ while that of Banū Damrah was green. Therefore, the Ashjaʾ proceeded towards Banū Damrah. Hearing this, the Messenger of God prepared to go to the Ashjaʾ for fighting, because of the agreement that he had with Banū Damrah [and he wanted to defend them from the Ashjaʾ]. Then God revealed: *They desire that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved, so that you might be (all) alike; therefore take not friends from among them until they migrate in Allah's way; but if they turn back, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take not from among them a friend or a helper.'*

"Then God excepted the Ashjaʾ and said: *Except those who reach a people between whom and you there is a covenant, or who come to you, their hearts shrinking from fighting you or fighting their own people; and if Allah had pleased, He would have given them power over you, so that they would have certainly fought you; therefore if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offeryou peace, then Allah has not made for you a way against them.*

"The area of the Ashjaʾ comprised of al Baydāʾ, al-Hill and al-Mustabāh, and they had reached in vicinity of the Messenger of God. They were frightened because of this proximity to the Messenger of God that he might send someone to fight them, while the Messenger of God was apprehensive that they might

attack his outer regions. Therefore, he thought of proceeding towards them. When he was thinking about it, the Ashjaʾ came and descended at the reef of Salaʾ—their chief was Masʾūd b. Rujaylah and they were seven hundred strong. It was in the month of Rabīʾu al-Awwal, 6 A.H. The Messenger of God called Usayd b. Husayn and said to him: 'Go with some of your companions to find out why the Ashjaʾ have come here.'

"Usayd went out with three of his companions and stood before them [the Ashjaʾ] and asked: 'What has brought you here?' Masʾūd b. Rujaylah, the Chief of the Ashjaʾ, went towards Usayd and greeted him and his companions. Then the Ashjaʾ said: 'We have come to make an agreement with Muhammad.' Usayd returned and informed the Messenger of God. The Messenger of God said: ''They were afraid that I might fight then; therefore they wanted peace between me and them.' Then he sent to them ten camel-load of dates, and said: 'It is a good thing (to send) a present before (a serious) work.' Thereafter he went to them and said: 'O people of Ashjaʾ! what has brought you here?' They said: 'Our home is near you, and there is none in our nation [that is, tribe] smaller in number than us; so we were disturbed at the thought of fighting you because we are in close proximity to you; and also we were disturbed at the thought of fighting our own tribe because of the smallness of our number among them; therefore we have come to conclude an agreement with you.' The Prophet accepted it and made an agreement with them. They stayed there that day and then returned to their area. It was about them that the verse was revealed: *Except those who reach a people between whom and you there is a covenant… then Allah has not made for you a way against them.*"

(16) al-Fadl Abu al-ʿAbbās narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh about the word of God: *or who, come to you, their hearts shrinking from fighting you or fighting their own people,* that he said: "It was revealed about Banū Mudlij; because they came to the Messenger of God and said: 'Our hearts are not ready to bear witness that you are the Messenger of God; therefore we are not with you nor with our people, [that is, tribe] against you.'" al-Fadl says: "I said: 'How did the Messenger of God treat them? [The Imām] said: 'He entered into a truce with them, until he is finished with [other] Arabs;

then he would invite them [to Islam]; if they accepted [then well and good]; otherwise, he would fight them.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

(17) Sayf b. ʿUmayrah says: "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh about [the verse],… *shrinking from fighting you or fighting their own people; and if Allah had pleased, He would have given them power over you, so that they would have certainly fought you.* He said: 'My father used to say: "It was revealed about Banū Mudlij; they remained neutral, so they did not fight the Prophet and were not with their people."' I said: 'Then what did he do with them?' He said: 'The Prophet did not fight them, until he finished with his enemy; then he threw it at them in the same way.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(18) It is narrated from Abū Jaʾfar that he said: "The words of God, *a people between whom and you there is a covenant,* refers to Hilāl b. ʿUwaymir al-Salamī; he made a covenant with the Messenger of God on behalf of his people; and he said during that covenant: 'On the condition that we do not frighten whoever comes to us [from you], O Muhammad! And you do not frighten whoever comes to you [from us].' So God forbade standing against someone with whom agreement was made." (*Majmaʾ al-bayān*)

Author's comment: These and nearly similar themes have been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, through various chains from Ibnʿ Abbās and others.

(19) Also, it is written therein: Abū Dawūd (in his *al-Nāsikh*), Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Nahhās and al-Bayhaqī (in his al-Sunan) have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās regarding the verse: *Except those who reach a people…,* that it was abrogated by the verse of the chapter of "Repentance": *So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them* [Qur'an, 9:6].

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Verses 92–94

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَأً ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَأً فَتَحْرِيرُ
رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَصَّدَّقُوا ۚ فَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ
عَدُوٍّ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ ۖ وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ
وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ ۖ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ
فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٩٢﴾

(4:92) ***And it does not behove a believer to kill a believer except by mistake, and whoever kills a believer by mistake, he should free a believing slave, and blood-money should be paid to his people unless they remit it as alms; but if he be from a tribe hostile to you and he is a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (suffices); and if he is from a tribe between whom and you there is covenant, the blood-money should be paid to his people along with the freeing of a believing slave; but he who does not find (means to do this) should fast for two months consecutively, a penance from Allah, and Allah is Knowing, Wise***

al-Khatāʾ (mistake) has no elongation; to read it with elongation is wrong; here it gives a meaning opposite of 'intentionally', as the following verse (*And whoever kills a believer intentionally…*) shows.

"It does not behove" in this verse denotes negation of demand or requisition. In other words, it says: When a believer enters the sanctuary of faith and belief, there remains in him nothing to demand the killing of another believer who like himself is within the same sanctuary, except if it happens without his intention. Thus the exception is joined, not isolated. The meaning in simple words is as follows: A believer does not want to kill a believer, per se; he cannot think of killing him knowing that he too is a believer. There are other verses like this sentence in the same style and the same negation of requisition. For a example: *And it is not for any man* [lit: It does not behove a man] *that Allah should speak to him…* (42:51); *it is not possible for you* [lit: it does not behove you]; *that you should make*

the trees thereof to grow… (27:60); *but they would not believe* [lit: it would not behove them to believe] *in what they had rejected before* (10:74) ; and other similar verses.

All the same, the verse indicates a legal prohibition in the form of a statement. That is: God has never allowed, nor will He ever allow, that a believer should kill another believer. He has made it unlawful except in the case of unintentional killing, inasmuch as the killer did not have any intention of killing a believer; therefore the unlawfulness is not applicable there. It could happen if, for example, he had no intention of killing at all, or if he thought that the victim was an unbeliever whose killing was justified.

Some exegetes have said that the said exception was isolated. According to them, if it is taken as a joined and real exception it would mean that unintentional killing is ordered or allowed. However, it has been explained above that its only significance is removal of prohibition from unintentional killing; not that such killing was allowed. There is no difficulty in accepting this interpretation, and the exception is therefore real and joined.

…and whoever kills a believer by mistake… remit it as alms: *al-Tahrīr* (to free a slave); *al-raqabah* (neck; used metaphorically for slave); *al-diyah* (blood-money; indemnity for bodily injury). It is incumbent (*wājib*) upon a believer, if he kills a believer unintentionally, to emancipate a believing slave and pay blood-money to the victim's heirs. However, if the victim's heirs leave the blood-money and remit it then it is waived and the killer is not obliged to pay it.

***…but if he be from a tribe hostile to you…*:** The pronoun, 'he', refers to the slain believer; hostile tribe means the unbelievers who fight the Muslims. If the person slain by mistake was a believer but his heirs were hostile unbelievers, the obligation to free a believing slave will remain in place, but there will be no payment of blood-money, because a fighting unbeliever does not inherit any thing from a believer.

***…and if he is from a tribe between whom and you there is a covenant…*:** As the context shows, in this sentence too the pronoun, '*he*', refers to the slain believer. 'Covenant' refers to agreement, whatever its nature; it includes the agreement of *al-dhimmah* [by which an unbeliever puts himself under the protection of the Muslims]. Meaning: If the slain believer is from a tribe which has an agreement with the Muslims, the killer is required to pay blood-money together with freeing a slave. In this

sentence, payment of blood-money is mentioned first to emphasize the importance of compliance with the agreement.

***…but he who does not find… should fast for two months consecutively*:** That is: he who is unable to free a slave—as it is the nearest item before this clause—*must fast for two months consecutively.*

***…a penance from Allah…*:** This order of fasting is a penance and mercy from God for the person who does not have means to free a slave; and this fits with lightening burden. This order lightens the burden of the believer who is financially incapable of freeing a slave.

Also, it is possible to take the 'penance' as a description of the whole laid down reparations beginning from: he should free a believing slave. Thus the meaning will be as follows: The prescription of these various reparations for a believer who kills another believer by mistake is a divine providence and penance for cleansing the killer from that filth. He should therefore be cautious and should not carelessly indulge in killing. It is like the words of God: *And there is life for you in the (law of) retaliation* (2:17)

At the same time it is a divine providence and penance for the society, because through this reparation their loss of one free man will be made up with addition of another free person, and the financial loss of the slain believer's family will be made up with the blood-money.

It is clear from the above that Islam deems freedom as life and looks at slavery as a sort of murder; also in its eyes a complete indemnity equals the average earning of a man. This topic will be dealt with in detail somewhere else.

The definitions and exact designation of unintentional and intentional killings, emancipation, indemnity, family of the slain person, and agreement, etc., as mentioned in this verse, may be found in *sunnah*. For further details see the books of *fiqh* (jurisprudence).

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٣﴾

(4:93) *And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is hell; he shall abide in it and Allah will send His wrath on him and curse him and prepare for him a great chastisement*

al-Taʾammud (intention of an act with its specific aspect). Every intentional act must be having a specific aspect; and it is possible for an

act to have more than one aspect. It is therefore possible that a single act may be intentional from one angle and unintentional from the other. Let us say that a hunter fires at an indistinct shape thinking that it was an animal, while in fact it was a man, in this case, if that man is killed, the act will be called intentional and wilful hunting but unintentional killing of the man. Likewise, if he beats a child with a stick for teaching him good manners and the child dies of the blow, it will be an unintentional killing. Consequently, killing a believer intentionally means that the killer had the intention of killing the believer, knowing that the blow or fire would kill him and realizing that the victim was a believer.

God has spoken very harshly concerning the punishment of the person who wilfully kills a believer and declared that he would abide in hell for ever. But the verses, *Surely Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases* (4:48); *and, surely Allah forgives the faults altogether* (39:53), may restrict to a certain extent the theme of the verse under discussion. Although it threatens the punishment of ever-lasting fire, it does not indicate an irreversible and final decree; therefore it may be forgiven through repentance or intercession.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَىٰ إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيرَةٌ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿٩٤﴾

(4:94) ***O you who believe! when you march forth (for fighting) in Allah's way, make investigation, and do not say to any one who offers you (salutation of) peace: "You are not a believer' coveting the goods of this world's life. But with Allah there are abundant gains; you were such before, then Allah conferred (His) grace on you; therefore make investigation; surely Allah is aware of what you doff***

al-Darb in this context means marching, travelling; the qualifying phrase, "in God's way," shows that it means marching forth for *jihād. al-Tabayyun* (to distinguish); here it means to differentiate between believer and unbeliever, as the next sentence shows: *and do not say to any one who*

offers you (salutation of) peace: "You are not a believer." Offering peace means offering the salutation of the believers, that is, peace. Some reciters have recited it *al-Salām* (submission; surrender).

Coveting the good of this world's life, indicates greed of riches and war-booty. *But with Allah there are abundant gains: al-Maghānim* is plural of *al-maghnam* (gain, war-booty). What is with God is more excellent than this world's benefits; because, the hereafter's gains are limitless and everlasting; you should therefore look forward to it.

…you were such before, then Allah conferred (His) grace on you, therefore make investigation; You too, before entering the fold of Islam, had the same tendency, that is, were covetous of the worldly riches and booties; then God bestowed His favor and grace on you; as a result, you turned from this world's gains towards the abundant gains of the hereafter, which is with God. In this background it is incumbent upon you to investigate and distinguish a believer from unbelievers. The order to investigate properly is repeated here for emphasis.

The verse obviously shows that there had actually occurred a killing of a believer. It contains admonition, but does not indicate that it was an intentional killing. Apparently someone among the believers had killed by mistake someone (from among polytheists) who had greeted him with peace. The said believer was not sure that the greeter was really a Muslim; he thought that he was using that salutation and presenting himself as a believer only to save his life. The verse admonishes the killer that Islam only looks at the appearance; the reality inside the hearts is known only to God, the Subtle, the Knower.

According to the above explanation, the clause: *coveting the goods of this world's life*, is an allusion to the state and condition of the people concerned. It means: Your behavior in killing someone who presents himself as a Muslim, without looking properly into his credentials, without investigating whether his claim was right, resembles the behavior of a person who covets riches and booties, and kills a believer who announces his belief, on petty unacceptable excuses. Of course, all the believers did have the same tendency before they accepted Islam; their only objective at that time was the riches of this world. But now they have been favored with true faith and God has shown them the right path. Now they should have investigated properly before taking any action. They must discard the behavior of the days of ignorance and cleanse themselves of all its motives.

Examining Narrations

(1) It is reported in al-*Durr al-manthūr*, under the verse, *And it does not behove a believer to kill a believer except by mistake:* Ibn Jarīr has narrated from ʿIkrimah that he said: "al-Hārith b. Yazīd b. Nubayshah (from the tribe of Banū ʿĀmir b. Luwʾayy), in company of Abū Jahl, used to torture ʿAyyāsh b. Rabīʾah. Then he [accepted Islam and] went forth migrating to the Prophet. [When he reached near Medina], ʿAyyāsh saw him at al-Harrah and attacked [and killed] him with sword, thinking that he [al-Hārith] was still an unbeliever. Then [ʿAyyāsh] came to the Prophet and informed him. Thereupon, the verse was revealed: *And it does not behove a believer to kill a believer accept by mistake…* The Prophet recited it to him and said: 'Stand up and free [a believing slave].' "

Author's comment: This theme has been narrated through other chains too. Some of them say that ʿAyyāsh had killed him at Mecca on the day Mecca was conquered; ʿAyyāsh, who till then was imprisoned by the polytheists who tortured him, came out [of prison], and met al-Hārith who by that time had accepted Islam although ʿAyyāsh didn't know it. So ʿAyyāsh killed him there at that time. But the report of ʿIkrimah seems more probable and more in keeping with the time of the revelation of the chapter, "The Women".

(2) Ibn Zayd says that the verse was revealed about Abu al-Dardāʾ. He was in an expedition; and went to a gorge to relieve nature. There he saw a man with his sheep. [Abu al-Dardāʾ] attacked him with sword; he said, 'There is no god except God'; but Abu al-Dardāʾ killed him and brought his sheep to his group. Then some doubt occurred in his mind, and he came to the Prophet and informed him. There upon this verse was revealed. (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Tabarī)

(3) Another report quoted in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, and transmitted by al-Rūyānī, Ibn Mandah and Abū Nuʾaym from Bakr b. Hārithah al-Juhanī narrates al-Juhanī's claim that it was revealed about him and he tells a story similar to that of Abu al-Dardāʾ. However, all these traditions are merely attempts to fit the verse on some events or episodes.

(4) al-Husayn b. Saʾīd narrates through his chain from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: "The Messenger of God said: 'Wherever emancipation of slave is prescribed, [freeing of even] a child suffices, except

in reparation of killing, because God, the High, says, *he should free a believing slave*; it means a slave who has accepted Islam, that is, has reached the age of responsibility [that is, has attained maturity] '" (*Tahdhību al-ahkām*)

(5) Mūsá b. Jaʾfar was asked: "How should a believing slave be recognized?" He said: "According to birth." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī) al-Ṣādiq was asked about a Muslim [living] in a land of polytheists who was killed by Muslims, and the leader [of the Muslims] came to know of it afterwards. He said: "He should free in his place a believing; slave; and it is the word of God, the Mighty, the Great: *but if he be from a tribe hostile to you*" (*Man lā yahduruh al-faqīh*).

Author's comment: A similar *hadīth* is narrated by al-ʿAyyāshī. The word of the Imām, "should free in his place", indicates that the emancipation aims at adding a free Muslim to take the place of the free Muslim who was killed, as we have written earlier. Also it may be inferred from it that the underlying reason of prescribing the emancipation as atonement of some other sins is to add a free person who has not committed any sin to fill the gap of the one who has gone out of the line as a result of that sin.

(6) al-Ṣādiq has said: "If a man is required to fast for two months consecutively, and he breaks the fast or becomes sick during the first month, he will have to repeat the fast; but if he has fasted the first month and also fasted a few days from the second month, and then is prevented from continuing because of some genuine cause, then he will have to repay the remaining days [only]. (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: That is, he will fast only the number of the days he could not fast from the second month. The ruling is inferred from the word, *consecutively*.

(7) The same Imām was asked: "Does a believer who intentionally killed a believer have [a chance of] repentance?" He said: "If he had killed him because of his belief, then there is no repentance for him; but if he had killed him in anger or because of some worldly matter, then his repentance is that he should undergo retaliation [that is, he should be killed in retribution;] and if he is not recognized [that is, if people do not know the identity of the killer,] he should himself go to the heirs of the killed believer and own his [guilt of] killing their relatives; then if they forgive

him and do not kill him, he should pay them the blood-money, emancipate a [believing] slave, fast two months consecutively and feed sixty needy persons—all this for repenting [and returning] to God, the Mighty, the Great." (*al-Kāfī; al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(8) [al-Shaykh narrates] through his chains from Abu al-Safātij that Abū ʿAbdillāh said about the word of God, the Mighty, the Great, *And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is hell*: "His recompense is hell if God meted out the punishment to him." (*Tahdhīb al-ahkām*)

Author's comment: The same meaning has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from al-Tabarānī and others from Abū Hurayrah from the Prophet. The above traditions contain many fine points we have already mentioned in the Commentary. There are many traditions on killing and its retribution which may be seen in the books of traditions.

(9) [al-Tabrisī] says about the verse: *And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is hell*, that it was revealed about Muqīs b. Dabābah al-Kinānī. He found his brother, Hishām, killed in [the place of] Banu al-Najjār; he described it to the Messenger of God, who sent Qays b. Hilāl al-Fihrī with him and said to him: "Tell Banu al-Najjār, 'If you know the killer of Hishām, surrender him to his brother in order that he may avenge himself, and if you do not know him then pay him his blood-money.'" al-Fihrī conveyed the message and they paid the blood-money. When he was returning with al-Fihrī, the Satan tempted him and said: "You achieved nothing. You took your brothers? blood-money and it will be a disgrace for you. Kill him who is with you, and it will be a life for a life and the blood-money will be an extra [bonus]."Thereupon he struck al-Fihrī with a rock and killed him; and rode a camel and returned to Mecca as an unbeliever; and recited (a poem, in which) he said:

I killed Fihrī in his (Hishām's) *retaliation while I was given his blood-money too,*
By the leaders of Banu al-Najjār, the noble and beautiful; Thus I got my revenge and lied down on pillow,
And I was the first to return to the idols.

Then the Prophet said: "I shall not grant his safety, neither in the sanctuary nor outside it." It has been narrated by al-Dahhāk and a group of exegetes. (*Majmaʾ al-bayān*)

Author's comment: A nearly similar tradition is narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās, Saʾīd b. Jubayr and others.

(10) It is written in *al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī about the verse: *O you who believe! when you march forth (for fighting) in Allah's way…*: "It was revealed when the Messenger of God returned from the expedition of Khaybar and sent Usāmah b. Zayd with some horsemen to some Jewish villages in vicinity of Fadak in order that he might call them to lslam. There was, in one of the villages, a man called Mirdās b. Nahīk al-Fadakī. When he heard of the horsemen of the Messenger of God, he gathered his family and property at the side of the mountain and came forward, saying: 'I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.' Usāmah b. Zayd passed by him, and speared him to death. When he came back to the Messenger of God, he informed him of it. The Messenger of God said to him: 'You killed a man who was bearing witness that there was no god except God and that I was the Messenger of God' He said: 'O Messenger of God! he had said it only to save his life.' The Messenger of God said: 'Neither did you remove the covering from his heart [to see what was inside it], nor did you accept what he said by his tongue, nor did you know what was inside his soul!' Usāmah then swore an oath that after that he would never kill any one who bore witness that there was no god except God and that Muhammad was the Messenger of God. Therefore, he did not join the Commander of the Believers in his battles. It was about this incident that the verse was revealed: *and do not say to any one who offers you (salutation of) peace: "You are not a believer," coveting the goods of this world's life*"

Author's comment: The same story has been narrated by al-Tabarī in his *al-Tafsīr* from al-Suddī. *al-Durr al-manthūr* quotes several other traditions describing why this verse was revealed; some of them say that the event concerned Miqdād b. al-Aswad al-Kindī; others mention Abu al-Dardāʾ; yet others, the name of Muhlim b. Juthāmah; while some others have left the story vague without mentioning the name of the killer or the victim. Be as it may, the history books mention the oath of Usāmah b. Zayd and the excuse he offered to ʿAlī for remaining aloof from his battles. And God knows better.

Verses 95-100

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً ۚ وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٥﴾

(4:95) ***The holders back from among the believers, not having any injury, and those who strive hard in Allah's way with their property and their persons are not equal; Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the holders back in rank, and to each Allah has promised good; and Allah has distinguished the strivers above the holders back (by) a great recompense***

al-Darar (the damage and defect in body) which prevents one from participating in *jihād* and fighting, e.g., blindness, lameness and sickness. Striving hard with their property means spending it in the way of God in order to gain victory over the enemies of the religion; striving with their persons denotes fighting in God's way.

The phrase: *and to each Allah has promised good*, indicates that the verse is speaking about those holders back who had not gone forth for *jihād* at a time when their participation was not very vital—because a sufficient number of warriors had already joined the Islamic force. Accordingly, the verse aims at encouraging and exhorting the believers to participate in *jihād*, to hasten to it and hurry in joining it.

As a further proof, see that God has exempted from *jihād* those who are not physically fit; then He says that the holders back [with exception of the unfit ones] are not equal to the fighters—yet the fact remains that the physically unfit ones too are not equal to the fighters in the way of God. [So, why this exception?] We may say that God will compensate their inability because their intention was good. Even then, the fighting, and martyrdom or victory over the enemies of God are really great distinctions for those who fight in the way of God over the non-participators.

In short, the verse serves to exhort and encourage the believers and re-awaken their spirit of faith in order that they should hasten and race towards good deeds and excellence.

…Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the holders back in rank,… : The sentence gives the reason why the two groups are not equal; that is why there is no conjunction etc., attached to it. *al-Darajah* (degree, rank); *al-darajāt* (rank after rank; degree after degree). As for the phrase, *and to each Allah has promised good,* it may refer to the two groups of the holders back and the strivers, or to all the three groups: the holders back without any injury, the holders back because of an injury and the strivers in the way of God. The word, "good", is an adjective whose related noun is omitted; it may mean good outcome, good recompense or similar things. This sentence is put here to remove a possible misunderstanding: A holder back from among the believers—hearing the preceding declaration—could have thought that now he had nothing to his credit and that his faith and all other good deeds were now of no value at all. God assures them that to each of them He has promised good.

***…and Allah has distinguished the strivers above the holders back (by) a great recompense: (high) degrees from Him and pardon and mercy…*:** This distinction and excellence explains in detail the distinction mentioned above. Also it contains another important message: The believers should not remain content with the good promise offered by the phrase: *and to each Allah has promised good*; they should not be indolent in striving in the way of God, should not neglect their duty in putting utmost effort to raise the word of truth and to erase the falsehood, because the strivers have been granted considerably great excellence and distinction above the holders back; they shall get very high degrees of forgiveness and mercy.

The verse contains a remarkable style:

First: The "strivers" have been qualified initially with the phrase: *in Allah's way with their property and their persons*; then it has come down to, *with their property and their persons*; and finally they are mentioned without any qualification or restriction.

Second: Their distinction is described first in singular, rank or degree and then it goes to plural, "degrees from Him."

Why? As for the qualifications of the strivers, the verse aims at description of the distinction and excellence of *jihād* on holding back. *Jihād* can only be of any value if it is done in the way of God, not in the way of one's desires, by giving away the most precious thing, that is, wealth and

property, and sacrificing what is even dearer than that, that is, one's person and life. That is why at the first opportunity it was fully explained with all details, *those who strive hard in Allah's way with their property and their persons*, so that no room is left for any misunderstanding or doubt. When it was said, *Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel,* there was actually no need to mention any qualifying phrase, because every thing had already been clarified; but as the sentence was to be followed by the phrase, *and to each Allah has promised good*, it was appropriate to explain the reason of excellence and distinction, (that is, spending the wealth and sacrificing the life in spite of their attraction); that is why only these two factors were used to qualify the strivers. When the time came to say, "and God has distinguished the strivers above the holders back (by) a great recompense," there was no need to mention any attribute at all; not even partially. As for the change of singular 'rank' or 'degree' to the plural 'degrees', in the first, (*Allah has made the strivers… to excel the holders back in rank*) the word *darajah* (rank, degree) is accusative of specification, and it only describes that the excellence is in rank and degree, without going into detail as to whether the said degree is one or more. On the other hand, when it says: "and God has distinguished the strivers (by) a great recompense: (High) degrees from Him", the word, 'distinguished', implies bestowal, and the word, "(High) degrees", is in explicative apposition to the preceding "a great recompense", or stand for it. The meaning: God, has given the strivers a great recompense, distinguishing them over the holders back by a great reward, that is, the high degrees from God.

In short, the speech mentions at first only that the strivers excel the holders back in rank, without saying whether the rank is one or more; while the next sentence says that it is not a single rank, rather there are many degrees and ranks, and that it is the great recompense given to the strivers.

On a cursory glance, it may look as if there was some contradiction in mentioning the rank or degree in singular and then in plural. But the above explanation may remove any such misunderstanding. Many other exegetes have tried to explain this apparent contradiction, but almost all their explanations seem far-fetched. For example:

The singular describes their excellence over the holders back who are unfit to fight, while the plural shows the excellence over those not having any injury. The singular indicates the worldly benefits, e.g., war-booty and

high prestige etc., while the plural points to the ranks of the hereafter, which surely are much superior, as God says: *and certainly the hereafter is much greater in respect of degrees.* (17:21)

The singular 'rank' shows their status in presence of God which is a spiritual reality, while the plural indicates the grades of the Garden and its high ranks which is a phenomenal affair.

You may see for yourself that there is nothing in the Qur'anic text to support any of these explanations.

دَرَجَاتٍ مِنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَرَحْمَةً ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٩٦﴾

(4:96) *(High) degrees from Him and pardon and mercy, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*

In the phrase, "(High) degrees from Him," the pronoun 'Him' refers to God, and this explanation is supported by the next words, "and pardon and mercy", assuming that these words describe the degrees, and obviously pardon and mercy comes from God. Alternatively, the pronoun may relate to the "great recompense" preceding it. [In this case, the translation will be changed to 'High degrees from it.']

The words, "and pardon and mercy", obviously describe the high degrees; the degrees, that is, the ranks bestowed by God, whatsoever their nature, are manifestation of divine pardon and mercy; and it has already been explained somewhere that the mercy, that is, divine bestowal of bounties, depends on removal of all impediments and obstacles which might prevent one from receiving those bounties—and this removal of obstacles is the pardon. Now, each level of divine bounty and favor and each rank and status [is mercy in itself, but it also prepares man to receive still higher rank; in this way] it is 'pardon' when seen in relation to the next higher rank. It is therefore perfectly right to say that the ranks of the hereafter—whatever their nature—are divine pardon and mercy. In most places where mercy, bounty or similar realities are mentioned in the Qur'an, it is usually joined with pardon and forgiveness. For example: *they shall have forgiveness and a mighty reward* (5:9); *and forgiveness and an honorable sustenance* (8:4); *they shall have forgiveness and a great reward* (11:11); *and forgiveness from Allah and (His) pleasure* (57:20); *and forgive us and have mercy on us* (2:286). There are many such verses in the Qur'an.

The verse ends on the words: *and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.* Its appropriateness with the theme of the verse in quite clear, particularly as

it ends on "pardon and mercy".

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ ۖ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا ۚ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾

(4:97) ***Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while the are unjust to their souls they shall say: "In what state were you?" They shall say: "We were weak in the earth." They shall say: "Was not Allah's earth vast (enough), so that you should have emigrated therein?" So these it is whose abode is hell, and it is an evil resort***

Tawaffāhum translated here as "cause to die" is in aorist tense; in that case its original form is *tatawaffāhum* from which one "ta" has been removed for easy pronunciation. The complete form is given in 16:28: *Those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to themselves. Then would they offer submission.*

Alternatively the verb may be taken as a past tense.

As evidenced by this latter verse, the injustice mentioned here refers to the harm they had inflicted on themselves by turning away from the divine religion and neglecting to establish its practices—all because they lived in the midst of unbelievers, among polytheists, and had no means of learning the religion's tenets and implanting what the belief in God's lordship demands. This may be clearly seen from the words: *they shall say: "In what state were you?" They shall say: "We were weak in the earth"*, [Read up to the end of the verse 100.]

God has explained the adjective, 'unjust', (used without a qualifying word) in these words: *the curse of Allah is on the unjust who hinder (people) from Allah's way and seek to make it crooked…* (7:44–45; 11:18–19). These verses define the injustice as turning away from God's way and seeking to make it crooked and altered. This definition fits on the theme of the verse under discussion.

…They shall say: "In what state were you?"…: That is: What was the state and condition of your religion? *ma* [in *fīma,* in what] is the shortened form of *mā* (what).

The verse points in a general way to the 'questioning in the grave' as the traditions say: that the angels ask the dead person about his religion,

This phenomenon is described also in another place: *Those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to themselves. Then would they offer submission: "We used not to do an evil." Aye! Surely Allah knows what you were doing, Therefore enter the gates of hell, to abide therein; so certainly evil is the dwelling place of the proud. And it is said to those who are pious: "What is it that your Lord has revealed?" They say: "Good…"* (16:28–30).

***…They shall say: "We were weak in the earth." They shall say: "Was not Allah's earth vast (enough), so that you should have emigrated therein?"…*:** The angels' first question: *In what state were you?* Was an enquiry about their religious condition; but the position of the unjust persons in that respect was not satisfactory; therefore they, instead of giving direct answer, tried to explain the reason of their objectionable condition: that they lived in a place, [country or town] where they could not obey the dictates of religion, because its inhabitants were powerful polytheists who oppressed them and prevented them from learning the rules of sharīʾah and acting upon them.

But their weakness—even if their claim was right—emanated from their abiding under the polytheists' sway, in a land under their domination. The enemies had no control or authority outside their boundary. Therefore, these 'weak' people were not really weak; they could easily have changed their condition by emigrating from that place. That is why the angels refuted their claim of weakness, reminding them that God's earth was vast enough for them to go forth and be free from the polytheists' oppression; it was not beyond their power to leave the land of oppression and emigrate to some other place. They actually were not weak people as they could have removed the fetters of oppression from themselves. It was their own wrong choice which had put them in that bad state.

The question, "Was not God's earth vast (enough) so that you should have migrated therein?" is for reprimand and rebuke, as is the first question, "In what state were you?" Alternatively this first question could be just an enquiry, because in the verses 28–30), of chapter 16 the same question has been addressed to the unjust and the pious ones. But in any case the second question is for reprimand.

The angels called the earth "God's earth"; it may be a pointer to the fact that God first gave this vastness to the Earth, and it was later that He called them to the faith and good deeds. The same idea may be inferred from the verse coming at the end: *And whoever emigrates in Allah's, way he will find in the earth many a place of refuge and abundant resources.*

As the earth has been described as 'vast', the preposition 'in' has been used for emigration: "so that you should have emigrated therein," that is, migrated from one of its places to another. Had it not been vast enough, the phrase would have been, emigrated *from* it.

Then after this questioning, God judged their case and said:

So these it is whose abode is hell, and it is an evil resort.

إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٨﴾

(4:98) ***Except the weak ones from among the men and the women and the children who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way (to escape)***

The exception is isolated. God calls this group weak and their weakness is explained in this very verse. It proves that the previously mentioned unjust people were not weak because they could liberate themselves from the fetters of oppression by emigrating from that land. Weak in reality are these people mentioned in this verse. To mention them with such detail, "the men and the women and the children" makes the divine order clearer and removes all possible misunderstandings. *Hīlah* (translated here as 'means') is derived from *al-haylulah* (to interpose, to come between); then it was used for a device which comes between a person and his goal; it is mostly used for what is done secretly and for objectionable activity—artifice, ruse, subterfuge. Its root contains a connotation of change, as al-Rāghib has written in his *Mufradāt al-Qur'an*.

The meaning: These people are unable to do anything to avert from themselves the oppression perpetrated against them by the polytheists; they cannot find a way to get out from the enemies' clutch. The 'way' in this context means the real path (e.g., the way to Medina for the intending emigrants from Mecca) as well as the metaphorical way, that is, every means which could free them from the polytheists' hands and put an end to their oppression and tyranny.

On the "Weak Ones"

The verse shows that ignorance of religious tenets is a valid excuse in God's eyes, provided it is caused by such inadequacy and weakness which were not contributed to by the ignorant person himself.

God says that ignorance of religion and inability to establish religious rites and tenets is an inequity which will not be forgiven by Him. Then He makes an exception of the weak persons and accepts their plea of 'weakness', and defines that weakness in a way which includes others too: that is, they are unable to avert the danger from themselves. Now, this inability manifests itself in two ways:

1) A man lives in a place where he does not have access to religious knowledge because there is no scholar there who could teach him the necessary details; or he is unable to act according to sharīʾah because the enemies forcefully prevent him from it and put him under unbearable torture and oppression; and he cannot leave that place to emigrate to a Muslim land and join his fellow Muslims. As a result, this inability may emanate from weakness of mind, sickness physical handicap, lack of money or other such factors.

2) A man is oblivious of the established truth of the religion and its tenets, and his thoughts have not led him to it, but at the same time he has no enmity towards truth, is not averse to it at all; if he knew the reality he would have readily accepted it; but the truth has remained hidden from him because of some factors [and, therefore, he does not know it].

This too is a 'weak' person who does not have a means and does not find a way to escape from his ignorance—not because of any enemies who might be threatening him from all sides with swords and spears—but because of other factors which have overpowered his thinking and put him under oblivion. Obviously, with this oblivion he has no power and with this ignorance he cannot find a way to the truth.

This explanation is based on the generality of the verse which shows that the given cause is unrestricted [and covers cases of unavoidable ignorance and oblivion]. The theme is supported by some other verses too. For example: *Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it is (the benefit of) what it has earned, and upon it is (the evil of) what it has wrought* (2:286). Obviously, a thing, which one is unaware of, is beyond one's ability in the same way as is a thing which one is forcefully prevented from.

This verse of the second chapter absolves one from responsibility in cases of lack of ability, and at the same time lays down a criterion for distinguishing a genuine inability from a false one. That is, the man should not have contributed towards that inability; if his total or partial ignorance of religion emanates from his own negligence or wrong choice

then he should be held responsible for it. In other words, it is he who has committed that sin. On the other hand, if that ignorance is caused—not by his own actions—but by some factors beyond his power, then it cannot be attributed to his own choice—he cannot be accused of committing a sin, or of being arrogant; he has not opposed the truth nor has he rejected it intentionally. In short, for him is what he has earned, and upon him is what he has wrought.

It appears from the above, that a 'weak' person is empty-handed. There is nothing for or against him in his account, because he has not earned anything. His judgement is in the hands of his Lord. This is clear from the next verse: *So these it may be, Allah will pardon them and Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving;* and from the verse 106 of ch. 9: *And others are made to await Allah's command, whether He will turn to them (in mercy); and Allah is Knowing, Wise*. And His mercy is ahead of His wrath.

فَأُولَٰئِكَ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا ﴿٩٩﴾

(4:99) *So these, it may be, Allah will pardon them, and Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving*

The weak ones have not earned any sin, because they were unable to remove their ignorance. Yet, as explained before, man's affairs are either good or evil, and it is enough for one's infelicity if one does not earn good for himself. Man, whether he is good, evil or just empty-handed, can never be free from the need of God's pardon and forgiveness; it is this divine pardoning which erases the traces of evil and infelicity. That is why God has offered them here a hope of pardon.

First the hope is offered to them of being pardoned, and it is immediately followed by the declaration: *and Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving*. It makes it almost definite that the divine forgiveness will cover them [on the day of judgement], as they have been separated, through exception, from the unjust ones who have been threatened that their abode is hell and it is evil resort.

وَمَنْ يُهَاجِرْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرَاغَمًا كَثِيرًا وَسَعَةً ۚ وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

(4:100) ***And whoever emigrates in Allah's way, he will find in the earth many a place of refuge and abundant resources; and whoever goes forth from his house emigrating to Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is surely incumbent upon Allah, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful***

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al-Rāghib has written: "*al-Raghām* (fine dust or soil); [they say] his nose fell in the dust, or someone rubbed his nose in dust; it is an idiom to show displeasure. A poet says: *When those noses are rubbed in dust, I do not (try to) please them,* No do I seek their pardon; rather I increase their displeasure. As the word is placed in opposition to seeking pleasure, it shows that rubbing nose in dust means to enrage, to embitter. That is why it is said: May God rub his nose in dust [that is, May God cause him to be indignant]; *arghamahū* (he made him angry); *rāghamahu* (They both tried to spite each other); then *al-murāghamah* was taken to mean "to quarrel with each other". God says: "He will find in the earth many a *murāghaman*", that is, ways and paths which he might use and if he saw something undesirable he would feel indignant; as you say: "I was displeased to so-and-so from such and such, [that is, I did not like that thing so I turned to so-and-so to express my displeasure]."

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The meaning is therefore as follows: And whoever emigrates in God's way (that is, seeking His pleasure by full involvement with religion in theory and practice), he will find in the earth many places, so that if someone prevents him in one place from following the religious tenets he would turn and emigrate to another place, thus rubbing the adversary's nose in dust and letting him be embittered and angry. [It is to convey this connotation that we have translated *murāghaman* as place of refuge.] And he will find abundance of resources in those new places.

Earlier, the angels had asked: *Was not Allah's earth vast (enough), so that you should have emigrated therein?* As the verse under discussion is based on it, it would apparently look appropriate to say, 'And whoever emigrates, he will find in the earth abundant resources.' But as God has added "many a place of refuge", and this refuge was of importance to a person who wanted to proceed in the way of God, the migration too was qualified by the phrase, "in God's way"; thus the whole verse is perfectly integrated and well-adapted to the main theme, that is, admonishing the believers living in polytheists' midst, exhorting them to emigrate in the way of God, and assuring them of abundant, resources if they emigrated.

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…and whoever goes forth from his house emigrating to Allah and His Messenger… Forgiving, Merciful: Emigration to God and His Messenger stands for emigrating to the place of Islam, where one can learn the Book of God and the *sunnah* of His Messenger, and act accordingly. The phrase: "death overtakes him", is an extended metaphor alluding to occurrence of death or sudden death. 'Overtaking' creates a mental image of a person pursuing another until he catches up with him. Likewise, the words, "his reward is surely incumbent on God", literally mean, his reward has surely fallen on God; this too is an extended metaphor alluding to the meaning given in the translation. There is certainly good reward and abundant recompense offered to the servant; and God will deal with him in His divinity, for Whom nothing is difficult, nothing is formidable; whatever He wills happens; and whatever He promises is fulfilled. The speech ends on the phrase, "and God is forgiving, Merciful". It emphasizes the good promise to assure them of full reward and recompense.

In these verses, God has divided those who claim to be believers into various groups according to their residence in the place of Islam or that of polytheism; and has described the appropriate recompense for each. The aim is first to admonish and warn, then to encourage and exhort them to emigrate to the land of Islam and assemble therein in order to strengthen the Islamic society. Thus they shall be able to unite and cooperate with each other in righteousness and piety, to bring up the word of truth and raise the standard of *tawhīd* and flag of the religion.

The first main group was of the believers who lived in the land of Islam: among them were those who strived hard in the way of God with their property and their souls. Then there were those who held back without any injury or disability; and finally those who held back because of disabling injury. God promised good to each sub-group, but He made the strivers to excel the holders back in ranks.

Another main group is of those who stayed in the land of polytheism; it is an unjust group which does not emigrate in the way of God; its abode is the hell and it is an evil resort. There is another sub-group of truly weak man, women and children, which is not unjust, they have no means nor do they find any way to escape; and lastly there are those who were not weak, they went forth from their houses emigrating to God and His Messenger, but were overtaken by death; their reward is surely incumbent upon God.

The verses, with all the classifications, are applicable to the Muslims in all eras and periods, although, to begin with, they were revealed to describe

the Muslims' condition in Arabia during the Prophet's time between his emigration to Medina and the conquest of Mecca. The land was divided in those day in two parts:

Dār al-Islām (the House of Islam) that is, Medina and the neighboring regions, dominated by the Muslims (who had complete freedom to observe their religion). Of course, there were some polytheists and followers of other religions too in that land, but they did not interfere with the Muslims because of various agreements, etc., they had with them.

Dār al-shirk (the House of polytheism) that is, Mecca and its neighboring regions, dominated by the polytheists who persisted in idol-worship and prevented those Muslims who lived in their midst from following their religion; they oppressed and tortured those Muslims and put them under utmost pressure hoping to turn them away from Islam.

The principle laid down in these verses provides guidance to the Muslims for all times to come. A Muslim is required to live in a place where he can acquire the knowledge of Islamic tenets and beliefs, can perform religious ceremonies and follow the sharī'ah's commands and rules. He must emigrate from a country where he is unable to learn religion's realities and finds no way to live according to Islamic principles. It makes no difference whether today that country is called *Dār al-Islām* or *Dār al-Shirk*, because these days the names have changed, the actual meanings have been discarded, religion is just a citizenship and Islam merely a name—without caring whether one called Muslim actually believes in its reality and follows its rules or not.

But according to the Qur'an, results emanate from the reality of Islam, not its name; and it obliges the Muslims to follow the spirit of its rules, not merely the letters. God says: *This shall not be in accordance with your vain desires nor in accordance with the vain desires of the People of the Book; whoever does evil he shall be required with it, and besides Allah he will find for himself neither a guardian nor a helper. And whoever does good deeds whether male or female, and he is a believer—these shall enter the garden and they shall not be dealt with a jot unjustly* (4:123-124); *Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve* (2:62).

Examining Narrations

(1) Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, Ibn Marduwayh and al-Bayhaqī (in his *al-Sunan*) have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said: "A group of Meccans had accepted Islam, but they kept it secret. The polytheists brought them out [that is, forced them to come out] with them on the day of Badr; some were afflicted, other were killed. The Muslims said: 'These our companions were Muslims and were forced; so let us pray for their forgiveness.' Then the verse was revealed: *Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls…* " He further said: "This verse was then written to those Muslims who were still at Mecca, that they had no excuse (to remain there). So they came out, but the polytheists overtook and harried them [so they returned to Mecca]. Then was revealed the verse: *And among men is he who says: "We believe in Allah;" but when he is persecuted in (the way of) Allah, he thinks the persecution of men to be as the chastisement of Allah;* (29:10) The Muslims wrote it to them; so they were afflicted with grief and lost hope of every good. Thereupon the verse was revealed: *Yet surely your Lord, with respect to those who emigrate after they are persecuted, then they struggle hard and are patient, surely your Lord after that is Forgiving, Merciful* (16:110). The Muslims again wrote to them about it that God has made for you a way out, so come away (from Mecca). They came out, the polytheists (again) overtook them, but the Muslims (this time) fought with them until was saved who was saved and was killed who was killed." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(2) Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Hātim have narrated from al-Dahhāk about this verse that he said: "They were some hypocrites who remained behind the Messenger of God at Mecca and did not emigrate with him to Medina; thereafter they came out with Qurayshite idol-worshippers to Badr, and were afflicted in the battle with [other polytheists]. Then God revealed this verse about them." (*ibid.*)

(3) Ibn Jarīr has narrated from Ibn Zayd about this verse that he said: "When the Prophet was sent and the (true) faith appeared and spread, hypocrisy too spread side by side. Some people came to the Messenger of God and said: 'O Messenger of God! If we were not afraid of these people that they would torment us and would

do and do [unbearable things to us], we would have accepted Islam [openly]; nevertheless we bear witness that there is no god except God and that you are the Messenger of God.' They used to say this to him. When the day of Badr came the polytheists stood up [to fight] and said: 'No one will remain behind from us but that we shall demolish his house and seize his property.' [Hearing it,] those people too went forth (with polytheists) who used to say those words to the Prophet; some of them were killed; some others were taken prisoners."

Then (Ibn Zayd) said: "As for those who were killed, they were those about whom God has said: *Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls… Was not Allah's earth vast (enough) so that you should have emigrated therein* - leaving these oppressors behind? *So these it is whose abode is hell and it is an evil resort.*

"Then God excused those with genuine inability and said: *Except the weak ones from among the men and the women and the children who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way* where they can head to; if they went forth they would be destroyed, *so these it may be Allah will pardon them* their staying in the midst of idol-worshippers.

"As for those who were captured, they said: 'O Messenger of God: you know that we used to come to you and bear witness that there was no god except God and that you were His Messenger; yet we had to come out with these people fearing (their reprisals)' God said: *O Prophet! say to those of the captives who are in your hands: "If Allah knows anything good in your hearts He will give to you better than that which has been taken away from you and will forgive you* the misdeed you have done"; that is, your coming out with the polytheists against the Prophet… *And if they intend to act unfaithfully towards you, so indeed they acted unfaithfully towards Allah before*—when they joined the polytheists in coming out—*but He gave (you) mastery over them."* (8:70–71)

(4) ʿAbd b. Hamīd, Ibn Abī Hātim and Ibn Jarīr have narrated from ʿIkrimah about the verse, *Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls…* and it is an evil resort, that he said: "It was revealed about Qays b. al-Fākih b. al-Mughīrah al-Hārith b. Zamʾah b. al-Aswad, Qays b. al-Walīd

b. al-Mughīrah, Abu al-ʾĀs b. Munabbih b. al-Hajjāj and ʿAlī b. Umayyah b. Khalaf." He further said: "When the polytheists of Quraysh and their followers went forth to protect Abū Sufyān b. Harb and the caravan of the Quraysh from the Messenger of God and his companions and also intending to take revenge of what they had suffered at Nakhlah; they took with them some youths who were unwilling (to join them as) they had (secretly) accepted Islam. They faced the Muslims at Badr without prior rendezvous. So (those youths) were killed at Badr while they were *kāfir*s and have turned away from Islam; and they were those we have named above."(*ibid.*)

Author's comment: There are a lot of traditions, from the Sunnī sources, of the same theme. Apparently all these are attempts to apply the verses to some suitable incidents, yet it is a good application. The most important information gleaned from these traditions as well as from meditating on the said verses is the existence of hypocrites in Mecca [even] before *hijrah* as well as after it. This fact has a direct bearing on discussion about the hypocrites as will be seen in the chapter of' "Repentance", God willing.

(5) Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Hātim have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said: "There was a man, Damrah from Banū Bakr, who was [very] sick. He told his people, 'Take me out of Mecca, because I find it hot (here). 'They said: 'Where should we take you to?' He indicated with his hand towards the way of Medina. They took him out but he expired at (only) two miles from Mecca. Then this verse was revealed: *And whoever goes forth from his house emigrating to Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him…*" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: There are many traditions of similar theme, but there is much discrepancy about identity of the believer who expired on the way. Various traditions name him as Damrah b. Jundab, Aktham b. Sayfī, Abū Damrah b. al-ʾĪs al-Zurqī, Damrah b. al-ʾĪs al-Laythī and Jundaʾ b. Damrah al-Jundaʾī. Some traditions say that it was revealed about Khālid b. Hizām who went out intending to emigrate to Ethiopia, and was bitten by a snake on the way and died.

(6) Some traditions narrate from Ibn ʿAbbās that it was Aktham b. Sayfī. The narrator asked him: "Then where is al-Laythī?" Ibn ʿAbbās said: "It was before al-Laythī, and it is particular (and)

general."

Author's comment: That is, the verse was revealed for Aktham in particular, then it is applied to others in general. It may be gleaned from the traditions that three Muslims had met their death while on their way to *hijrah*: Aktham b. Sayfī, al-Laythī and Khālid b. Hizām. But [it is difficult] to pinpoint as to whom the verse was revealed about; and the traditions are probably the narrators' attempts to apply the verse to this or that person.

(7) Zurārah says: "I asked Abū Jaʾfar about the *mustadʾaf* (weak, weakened). He said: 'He is the one who does not have a means to disbelief (that he may disbelieve), nor does he find a way to belief; he is unable to believe and unable to reject (the belief); among them are the children as well as those men and women whose understanding is like that of the children; they are freed from responsibility.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: The tradition is extensively narrated from Zurārah; al-Kulaynī, al-Sadūq and al-ʿAyyāshī have narrated it from him through numerous chains.

(8) al-Kulaynī narrated through his links from Ismāʾīl al-Juʾfī that he said: "I asked Abū Jaʾfar about the religion which no one can afford to be ignorant of. He said: 'The religion is spacious, but the Khārijites, as a result of their ignorance, have cramped it for themselves.' I said: 'May I be your ransom! Should I then relate to you the religion which I follow? He said: 'Yes.' So I said: 'I bear witness that there is no god except God, and Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger; and I acknowledge (and believe in) what he has brought from God, the High; and I love you and I keep away from your enemies and those who oppressed you and [wrongfully] became your rulers and usurped your rights.' He said: 'By God you have not overlooked anything. It is, by God! the [religion] we are on.' Then I said: 'Can someone not knowing this matter be saved?' He said: '[None] except the weak ones.' I said: 'Who are they?' He said: 'Your women and your children.' Then he said: 'Had you seen Umm Ayman? I bear witness that she was from the people of the garden, but she did not know [in such detail the religion] you are on.'" (*ibid.*)

(9) Sulaymān b. Khālid narrates that he asked Abū Jaʾfar about the weak ones. The Imām said: "A simple-minded woman in her private room; a slave-girl that you tell her to pray and she prays,

she does not know except what you tell her; a foreign slave who does not understand except what you tell him; an aged old man; a child, a small boy: these are the weak ones. But a thick-necked man, disputatious (and) antagonist, who deals in sale and purchase, whom you cannot tire in anything: Will you say, he is weak? No; by no means." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(10) Sulaymān has narrated from al-Ṣādiq that he said about this verse: "O Sulaymān! In these weak ones there are those who have thicker necks than yours. Weak are the people who fast and pray, keep their stomachs and genitals away [from forbidden things]; they do not believe that the right is with our adversaries; they are holding the tree's branches; these are that God may pardon them if they keep the hold of the tree's branches and know those. Then if God pardons them it will be by His mercy, and if He punishes them it will be because of their error." (*Maʾāni al-akhbār*)

Author's comment: The words, "they do not believe that the right is with our adversaries", mean that they do not have ill-feelings towards us, or that such ideas are not based on their own negligence, as is clear from the following traditions.

(11) al-Ṣādiq has said that weak ones are of many kinds, differing among themselves; and anyone among the People of the *Qiblah* (that is, Muslims) who is not inimical to us, is *mustadʾaf,* weak. *(ibid.)*

(12) al-Ṣādiq said explaining this verse: "'*who have not in their power the means*' to our enmity, so that they could have got ill-feelings [towards us], '*nor can they find a way*' to the truth, that they could come on the right path; they will enter the garden because of their good deeds and their abstaining from the unlawful things forbidden by God, but they will not get the rank of the righteous ones." (*ibid.; al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī)

(13) Durays al-Kunāsī narrates that he said to Abū Jaʾfar: "May I be made your ransom! What is the condition of those who believe in the One God and the prophethood of Muhammad, who have committed sins and die without believing in an imām and do not know about your love and obedience?" He said: "As for these, they shall remain in their graves, and not come out; whoever (among them) had done good deeds and did not show any animosity [towards us], a tunnel will be opened for him to the garden which

God has created in the west; thus refreshing breeze will continue reaching him in his grave up to the Day of Resurrection until he comes before God; He will take account of his good and evil, then he will go either to the paradise or to the fire. These are they who depend on the decision of God. Then he said: "And likewise is done to the weak ones, the idiots, the children and the minor children of the Muslims. And as for [our] antagonists among the People of the *Qiblah*, a tunnel is dug for them to the fire which God has created in the east, and will reach to him the flames, sparks, smoke and the hell's out-bursts up to the Day of Resurrection; then their destination is the hell." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-Qummī)

(14) al-Ṣādiq narrates from his father, from his and father, from ʿAlī that he said: "Surely the Garden has eight gates: from one gate will enter the Prophets and the Truthful ones; from another gate will enter the Witnesses and the Good servants; and from five gates will enter our Shīʾahs and lovers;… and from [the eighth] gate will enter all the Muslims who bear witness that there is no god but God and in whose heart there is not an atom's weight of animosity towards us, the Ahl al-bayt. (*al-Khisāl*)

(15) Humrān narrates: "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh about the word of God: *Except the weak ones*. He said: 'They are the People of *al-wilāyah* (friendship, authority, power, guardianship.)' I said: 'Which *wilāyah*?' He said: 'It is not the *wilāyah* in religion, but the *wilāyah* in marrying each other, inheriting from each other and mixing with each other; they are neither believers nor *kāfir*s, they are the ones made to await God's command." (*Maʾāni al-akhbār; al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: It refers to the verse: *And others are made to await Allah's command, whether He will chastise them or whether He will turn to them (in mercy)…* (9:106)

(16) ʿAlī said: "The name of weakness is not used for him to whom the proof has reached, and his ears heard it and his heart understood it." (*Nahj al-balāghah*)

(17) [Imām] al-Kādhim was asked about the weak ones. He wrote: "The weak is he to whom proof has not been conveyed and who is unaware of [religious] difference. But he is no more weak once he knew the difference." (*al-Kāfī*)

(18) al-Ṣādiq was asked: "What do you say about the weak ones?" He replied in a dismayed manner, 'Have you left anyone who could be called weak? Where are the weak ones? Because, by God! this affair of yours [that is, Shīʾite faith] has been taken by ladies in their boudoirs to other ladies, and have discussed it the water-carriers in the streets of Medina." (*ibid.*)

(19) ʿUmar b. Isḥāq says: "Abū ʿAbdillāh was asked as to what was the definition of the weak which has been mentioned by God. He said: 'He who does not properly recite any of the Qurʾanic chapters, while God has created it in such a way that no one should fail to recite it properly.'" (*Maʾāni al-akhbār*)

Author's comment: There are several other Traditions; but what has been quoted above covers all the themes mentioned therein. Although the traditions apparently seem to differ with one another, yet if we overlook the particulars which throw light on various degrees of weakness, all of them jointly prove one fact which the generality of the verse shows: that weakness means not finding one's way to the right path—without any negligence on one's own part.

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Verses 101-104

The verses ordain the prayer of fear and shortened prayer in journey, and they end on exhortation of the believers to pursue the polytheists; they are well-connected with the preceding verses which dealt with jihād and its various aspects.

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ
إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا
مُبِينًا ﴿١٠١﴾

(4:101) ***And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you that you shorten the prayer, if you fear that those who disbelieve will cause you distress; surely the unbelievers are your open enemy.***

al-Junāh (sin, impediment, renunciation); *al-qasr* (shortening of prayer). [al-Tabrisī] has said in *Majmaʾ al-bayān*: "The root *qasr* when used for prayer comes in three stems: The base stem, *qasara* (which has been used in the Qur'an), *qassara* (the stem, *tafʿīl*) and *aqsara* (the stem, *ifʿāl*)."

Meaning: When you are in journey then there is no impediment or sin for you if you shorten the prayer. The phrase, "there is no blame on you", apparently shows permission only, but the context points to obligation and incumbency; as is seen in the verse: *Surely the Safā and the Marwah are among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs ʿumrah thereof there is no blame on him to go round them both* (2:158); although *al-Tawāf* (to go round) is *wājib* (compulsory). The reason why this expression shows obligation is that the position here is that of legislation, and it is enough in this place just to disclose that a certain order has been laid down; there is no need to explain all its aspects and particulars in a comprehensive manner. To a certain extent the same is the position of the verse: *and that you fast is better for you if you know* (2:184)

…if you fear that those who disbelieve will cause you distress;…: *al-Fitnah* (translated here as causing distress) is used for numerous meanings; however when the Qur'an uses it in connection with disbelievers and

polytheists, it refers to the atrocities, like murder, torture, etc., which they inflicted on the Muslims; and the context too points to this meaning, that is, if you fear that the enemies will attack you putting you to the sword.

This clause is a proviso, limiting the preceding order: *there is no blame on you that you shorten the prayer*. It shows that shortening of prayer was ordained when there was a fear of disbelievers' mischief. As a second step the rule was extended to all cases of legal journey even if there was no fear. It means that the Qur'an explained one case where this law was to be applied, and the *sunnah* of the Prophet described all other situations and [these] cases will be seen in the Traditions.

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا
أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَىٰ لَمْ
يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۗ وَدَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً
وَاحِدَةً ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَذًى مِنْ مَطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ
مَرْضَىٰ أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ ۖ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ
عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

(4:102) ***And when you (O Prophet!) are among them and establish the prayer for them, let a party of them stand up with you, and let them take their arms; then when they have prostrated themselves let them go to your rear, and let another party who have not prayed come forward and pray with you, and let them take their precaution and their arms; (for) those who disbelieve desire that you may be inattentive to your arms and your luggage, so that they may then turn upon you with a sudden united attack; and there is no blame on you, if you are troubled by rain or if you are sick, that you lay down your arms, and take your precaution; surely Allah has prepared a disgraceful chastisement for the unbelievers.***

It explains how to perform prayer of fear. The verse is addressed to the Prophet supposing him to be the *imām* of that prayer; the order is thus explained through an example—it makes the rule clearer in a fewer words and beautiful style; "and establishing the prayer for them" refers to

congregational prayer; "let a party of them stand up with you" points to their standing behind the Prophet following him in the prayer; and it is they who are required to take their arms with them; "when they have prostrated themselves… " means, when they have prostrated and completed their prayers, they should go to the rear to take the place of those who have not prayed yet, enabling them to come forward and pray with you and this second group too should "take their precaution and their arms".

The meaning then is as follows—and God knows better: When you, O Messenger of God! are among them, and the situation is fraught with danger, and you establish the prayer for them, that is, the congregational prayer with you as its leader, then the whole group should not join in the prayer together; only a party of them should stand behind you for prayer (taking their arms with them) and the other group should protect them and guard their possessions; when those who are praying behind you finish their *sajdah* and their prayer, they should go to the rear to relieve those who were until now protecting them and guarding their possessions. Now, this second group who have not prayed yet should come and join you in the prayer, and they too should take their precaution and their arms with them.

…another party who have not prayed…: *al-Tāifah* (party, group) is of feminine gender, but it refers here to those who are able to fight, that is, men; the feminine adjective *ukhrā* (another) agrees with the noun *tāifah* which it refers to, while the masculine pronouns in "have not prayed" etc., look at the people described.

The words, "take their precaution and their arms" contain an interesting metaphor, as it treats "precaution" as a sort of arms for defence, using the verb 'take' for both.

…(for) those who disbelieve desire that you may be inattentive to your arms and your luggage, so that they may turn upon you with a sudden united attack…: It gives the reason for the above law; its meaning is clear.

***…and there is no blame on you… a disgraceful chastisement for the unbelievers*:** The rule is further relaxed for those who are troubled by rain or are sick, that they may lay down their arms; however it is very much emphasized that they should take their precaution, and not be inattentive to the unbelievers, because they are on the look out for the weak points of the Muslims.

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ ۚ فَإِذَا

اطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ ۚ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا ﴿١٠٣﴾

(4:103) ***Then when you have finished the prayer remember Allah standing and sitting and reclining; but when you are secure, keep up prayer; surely prayer is a timed ordinance for the believers.***

Qiyāman (standing) and *quʾūdan* (sitting) are either plurals or verbal nouns, and in either case they are circumstantial clauses; the same applies to 'reclining'. These words emphasize that the believers should continuously remember God, in all conditions and in every place.

***…but when you are secure, keep up prayer…*:** As the context shows, the clause, "when you are secure", is in opposition to: *when you journey in the earth*, and thus obviously means, when you return to your homes. Accordingly, "keep up prayer" would mean to pray full four *rakaʾāt*; because the prayer of fear and danger was called "shortened prayer"

…surely prayer is a timed ordinance for the believers: *al-Kitābah* (writing, translated here as ordinance) implies obligatoriness and imperativeness, as God says:… *fasting is prescribed* (lit.: written) *for you as it was prescribed for those before you* (Qur'an, 2:183). *al-Mawqūt* (timed), shows that prayer is an obligation prescribed for fixed times to be established at known intervals.

Apparently, timeliness of prayer implies its permanence and imperativeness—it mentions a requirement (of time) to imply the obligatory (prayer). When it says that prayer is a timed ordinance, it means that it is an obligation, confirmed and permanent, not subject to any change; it cannot be avoided or waived at any time. The adjective, 'timed', if taken in its literal meaning has no relevance to the context, because the preceding statements have no connection with prayer being a timed ordinance; while this sentence is meant to explain the reason for the preceding one, that is, *when you are secure keep up prayer*. Thus apparently, 'timed' means a firm obligation which can never be waived; it is unalterable and can never be replaced by any alternative, unlike the fast which some times is changed to redemption.

وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي ابْتِغَاءِ الْقَوْمِ ۖ إِنْ تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ ۖ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

(4:104) ***And be not weak-hearted in pursuit of the enemy; if you suffer pain, then surely they (too) suffer pain as you suffer pain, while you hope from Allah what they do not hope; and Allah is Knowing, Wise***

al-Wahn (weakness); *al-ibtighāʾ* (pursuit), *al-alam* (pain, to suffer pain); the clause: *while you hope from Allah what they do not hope*, is a circumstantial one. You and your enemies both equally suffer pain, so you are not in a worse position than your enemies; rather you are in a more pleasant and comfortable condition, inasmuch as you expect victory over them and hope for forgiveness from your Lord who is your guardian; as for your enemies, they have no guardian, nor do they entertain any hope to cheer themselves or which could incite them to work energetically and push them towards their goal. And God knows what is beneficial to His servants; He is Wise in His orders and prohibitions.

Examining Narrations

(1) According to *Tafsīr* of al-Qummī, the verse (prescribing the prayer of fear) was revealed when the Messenger of God was proceeding towards Hudaybiyyah, en route to Mecca. When the Quraysh heard the news, they sent Khālid b. al-Walīd with two hundred horses to encounter the Messenger of God. He hindered the (progress of the) Messenger of God on the mountains. Somewhere on the way, the time of *zuhr* prayer came, Bilāl said the *adhān*, and the Messenger of God led the people in the prayer. Khālid b. al-Walīd then said: "If we had attacked them when they were praying, we would have got them, because they do not break their prayer. However, now the time of another prayer is approaching which they love more than their eyesight; and when they start that prayer we shall raid them. Then Jibrīl (Gabriel) brought to the Messenger of God the (verses of) prayer of fear: *And when you are among them…*

(2) *Majmaʾ al-bayān* says about the verse, *and there is no blame on you, if you are troubled by rain…*, that it was revealed when the Prophet was at ʿUsfān and the polytheists at Dajnān; both parties stopped there; and the Prophet prayed *zuhr* with the Muslims with perfect *rukūʾ* and *sujūd;* then the polytheists wanted to attack them; and some of them said: "[Although we missed this chance]

they will pray another prayer [that is, *ʿasr*] which is dearer to them from this one." Then God revealed to the Prophet this verse, and he prayed the *ʿasr* with them as the prayer of fear. And this was the reason why Khālid b. al-Walīd accepted Islam.

(3) Abū Hamzah [al-Thumālī] has written in his *Tafsīr* that the Prophet went to fight Banū Anmār, and God vanquished them and the Muslims captured the enemy's children and property. Then the Messenger of God and the Muslims alighted; not a single enemy was in sight; so they laid down their arms; the Messenger of God went away to relieve himself (and he too had laid down his arms), and he went so far that a [dry] valley sheltered him from his companions. By the time he was finished the river-bed was flowing copiously and the rain was coming down; the flowing valley came between him and his companions. He sat down under a tree. Then al-Ghawrath b. al-Hārith al Muhāribī saw him, and his companions said to him: "O Ghawrath! (Look,) here is Muhammad, separated from his companions." He said: "May God kill me if I don't kill him." He came down the hill with a sword; and the Messenger of God did not notice him until he stood over him with his unsheathed sword in hand. He said: "O Muhammad! Who will now protect you from me?" The Messenger said: "God." [All of a sudden] the enemy of God fell down on his face. Now, the Messenger of God stood up and took his sword, and said: "O Ghawrath! Now, who will save you from me?" He said: "No one." The Messenger of God said: "Do you bear witness that there is no god but God, and that I am the servant of God and His Messenger?" He said: "No. But I promise that I'll never fight you nor will ever help any enemy against you." Then the Messenger of God gave his sword back to him. [Seeing this magnanimity,] Ghawrath said to him: "By God! you are certainly better than me." He said: "I am more entitled to it,"

Then Ghawrath went back to his companions. They said: "O Ghawrath! We saw you standing over his head with sword, then what prevented you from [killing] him?" He said: "God. I inclined towards him with the sword to kill him; then I don't know who it was that pushed me between my shoulders, and I fell down on my face; my sword fell down and Muhammad took it before I could reach it." Then the valley calmed down and the Messenger of

God went to his companions and told them what had happened; and recited before them: *and there is no blame on you if you are troubled by rain…* (*ibid.*)

(4) al-Sadūq has narrated through his chains from ʿAbdu al- Rahmān b. Abī ʿAbdillāh from al-Ṣādiq that he said: The Prophet prayed with his companions in the battle of Dhāt al-Riqāʾ; and he divided them in two groups; he told one group to stand before the enemy and the other stood [praying] behind him; so he said *takbīratu al-ihrām*, and they said too, and he recited and they listened, then he did *rukūʾ* and they did, and he did *sajdah* and they did; thereafter, the Messenger of God continued in his prayer standing [in the second *rakʾah*] while the companions prayed their second *rakʾah* individually and said *salām*. Then they rushed to their companions and stood before the enemy, and their companions came and stood behind the Messenger of God and he said *takbīr* and they said too, and he recited and they listened, and he did *rukūʾ* and they did, and he did *sajdah* and they did; then the Messenger of God sat down and recited *tashahhud* and *salām*; and they stood up and completed the [second] *rakʾah* by themselves and then recited [*tashahhud* and] *salām*. And God had said to his Prophet: *And when you are among them and establish the prayer for them… surely prayer is a timed ordinance for the believers.* And this is the prayer of fear about which God had ordered His Prophet.

He also said: One who leads (his) people in *maghrib* in prayer of fear, will pray one *rakʾah* with the first group and two *rakaʾāt* with the second one (*Man lā yahduruh al-faqīh*)

(5) al-Shaykh has narrated through his chains from Zurārah that he said: "I asked Abū Jaʾfar about the prayer of fear and the prayer of journey, will both of them be shortened? He said: 'Yes; and the prayer of fear is more deserving to be shortened than the prayer of journey in which there is no fear.'" (*Tahdhīb al-ahkām*)

(6) al-Sadūq narrates through his chains from Zurārah and Muhammad b. Muslim that they said: "We said to Abū Jaʾfar: 'What do you say about prayer in journey? How is it? and how many [*rakaʾāt*]?' He said: 'Verily God, the Mighty, the Great, says: *And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you that you shorten the prayer*; accordingly, shortening of prayer during

journey is compulsory, as is completing it when in presence [that is, when not in journey].'" They said: "But God only says; *there is no blame on you*; He did not say: 'Do it'; how can it convey the connotation of obligation like that of praying full prayer in presence?" He said: "Has not God said: *Surely the Safā and the Marwā are among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs ʿUmrah thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both* [2:158]? Don't you see that *tawāf* between the two is *wājib?* It is because God has mentioned it in His Book, and His Prophet had done it. Likewise, shortening of prayer during journey is a thing which the Prophet had done [and] God has mentioned it in His Book." Then we said to him: "Then a person who prayed four (*rakaʾāt*) in journey, should he repeat (that) prayer or not?" (The Imām) said: "If the verse of shortening (of prayer) was read and explained to him, and yet he prayed four (*rakaʾāt*), he will repeat it [that is, will repeat praying two *rakaʾāt*]; and if the verse was not read before him and he did not know it, then there is no repetition. And all *wājib* prayers during journey are two *rakaʾāt* except *maghrib*, as it is three *rakaʾāt*, (and) there is no shortening in it; the Messenger of God left it three *rakaʾāt* in journey and in presence… " (*Man lā yahduruh al-faqīh*)

(7) al-Suyūtī writes: Ibn Abī Shaybah, ʿAbd b. Hamīd, Ahmad, Muslim, Abū Dawūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāī; Ibn Mājah, Ibn al-Jārūd, Ibn Khuzaymah, al-Tahāwī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Nahhās (in his *al-Nāsikh*) and Ibn Hibbān have narrated from Yaʾlā b. Umayyah that he said: "I asked ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb about the verse: *there is no blame on you that you shorten the prayer, if you fear that those who disbelieve will cause you distress*, [is it valid now when] the people are secured and safe? ' ʿUmar said to me: 'I too was wondering about it as you do, so I asked the Messenger of God about it and he said: "It is a charity which God has bestowed upon you, so you should accept His charity." ' " (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(8) ʿAbd b. Hamīd, al-Nasāī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Hibbān and al-Bayhaqī (in his al-Sunan) have narrated from Umayyah b. Khālid b. Asad that he asked Ibn ʿUmar: "Do you think that the prayer should be shortened in journey? Surely we do not find it in the Book of God; all that is mentioned therein is the prayer of fear." Ibn ʿUmar

said: "O my nephew: Surely God sent Muhammad and we did not know anything; so we do only as we saw the Messenger of God doing; and the shortening of prayer in journey is the system established by the Messenger of God." (*ibid.*)

(9) Ibn Abī Shaybah, al-Tirmidhī (who has said that it is correct) and al-Nasāī have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said: "We prayed with the Messenger of God between Mecca and Medina two *rakaʾāt* while we were safe and had no fear of anything." *(ibid.)*

(10) Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ahmad, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dawūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasāī have narrated from Hārithah b. Wahb al-Khuzāʾī that he said: "I prayed with the Prophet *zuhr* and *ʿasr* at Minā two *rakaʾāt*, with most numerous multitude of people and in most secured condition." (*ibid*.)

(11) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of narrators from Dawūd b. Farqad that he said: "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh about the word of God, *surely prayer is a timed ordinance*. He said: '[It means] firm ordinance; however if you make haste a little or delay a little it will do you no harm, provided you do not neglect it altogether, because God, the Mighty, the Great, says:… *neglected prayers and followed the sensual desires, so they will certainly meet perdition*'" (19:59) (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: It is an indication that *wājib* prayers have some latitude so far as their timings are concerned, as other traditions show.

(12) Muhammad b. Muslim narrates from the fifth or the sixth Imām that he said about the *maghrib* prayer in the journey: "Do not leave if you are delayed for some time; then you may pray it when you wish to pray the *ʿishāʾ*; and if you wish you may continue the journey for sometime until the reddish color [on the horizon] goes away. Surely, the Messenger of God had prayed *zuhr* and *ʿasr* together and *maghrib* and *ʿishāʾ* together, and he used to delay and advance. God, the High, has said: *surely prayer is a timed ordinance*, [and by this expression] He only meant that it was obligatory for the believers, He did not mean anything else. Otherwise, if it meant what they say, the Messenger of God would not have prayed like this, and he was most knowledgeable and had all the information; and he was as they say; and if it [that is, always praying separately] were good, the Messenger of God would certainly have ordered it.

> And in the battle of Siffīn, people, including the Commander of the Believers, could not pray *zuhr, ʿasr, maghrib* and *ʿishāʾ* and ʿAlī, the Commander of the Believers ordered them and they said *Allahu akbar*, and *lā ilāha illa ʿllāh*, and *subhāna ʿllāh* on foot and horse, because God has said: *But if you are in danger, then* (say your prayer) on foot or on horse-back [2:239]. "So ʿAlī ordered them [to do so] and they did." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: These traditions, as you see, agree with the preceding Commentary. There are very many traditions of this meaning, and especially from the Ahl al-bayt, but we have quoted only a few of them as example. Of course, there are some other traditions from the Sunnī sources which oppose it, but they themselves contradict each other. However, to review those traditions and have a look at all *ahādīth* describing the prayer of fear in particular and prayer during journey in general, is in the domain of Islamic Jurisprudence, not of *tafsīr*.

(13) It is written in *al-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī that the word: *And be not weak-hearted in pursuit of the enemy…*, is in conjunction with the verse 139 of the chapter of "The Family of ʿImrān": *If a wound has afflicted you, a wound like it has also afflicted the (unbelieving) people…* And we have explained there the reason why that verse was revealed.

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Verses 105-126

Ponder on these verses and you will realize that all are revealed in one context. They exhort one to adhere to justice in judgement and admonish a judge not to incline towards wrong-doers in his decision, as it would be an injustice to the rightful party.

This is done by pointing to some incidents which had happened at the time of their revelation; then they discuss relevant religious realities, telling the Muslims to adhere and abide to them; in this process, they remind the believers that religion is a reality, not only a name; what is important is putting it into practice, not just calling oneself a Muslim.

Obviously, it was that incident to which the Qur'anic words refer: *And whoever commits a fault or a sin, then accuses of it one innocent, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin.* It clearly shows that there was some such crime which could be attributed to someone else, like theft, murder, plunder or damage, etc., and there was a possibility that the perpetrators would try to mislead the Prophet in his judgement, but the verses assure the Prophet that God was there to protect him.

Apparently, it was the same incident to which the preceding verses refer, as it is clear from the words: *and be not an advocate on behalf of the treacherous… They hide themselves from men… Behold! you are they who plead for them in this world's life.* Treachery and perfidy is obviously used for breach of trust, when one embezzles or meddles with something given to him in trust; but the context of the words, *surely Allah does not love him who is treacherous, sinful. They hide themselves from men…* shows (as will be explained later) that they refer to treachery concerning theft, etc. It is because all the believers are like one soul, and all are responsible to look after a property belonging to one of them—they have to guard it and keep it secure; in this background, if one embezzles or steals it, it is tantamount to being unfaithful to one's own self.

Meditation on the verses shows that probably someone had committed the theft, the matter was brought to the Prophet's notice, but the thief accused someone else who had nothing to do with the crime, then the relatives of the thief urged the Prophet to give judgement in their favor

against the innocent one; but these verses were revealed and God exonerated the accused from their false allegation.

Thus, the verses squarely fit the event narrated concerning their revelation when Abū Ṭu'mah b. al-Ubayriq had committed the theft, although, as we have repeatedly said, the traditions giving the reasons of revelation, most of the times, are mere attempts to fit the narrated stories on pertinent verses.

The verses prove authoritativeness of the Prophet's judgement, and his sinlessness as well as some other realities which, God willing, will be explained later.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَائِنِينَ خَصِيمًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

(4:105) ***Surely We have revealed the Book to you with the truth that you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has shown you; and be not an advocate on behalf of the treacherous.***

Judging between people, apparently, means hearing the cases of their disputes and contentions—the matters dealt by judiciary—and removing their discord through the judgement. This verse says that judging between people was the main objective for which the Book was revealed. This theme squares with the verse 2:213, which says: *Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed…*

The verse under discussion, *Surely We have revealed the Book to you…,* in its particularity is like the other, *Mankind was but one people…,* in its generality; and it further shows that the right to judge was given to the Messenger of God and that his opinion and view had been stamped with divine authority. Arriving at a judgement, after looking into often conflicting arguments of the parties concerned, invariably compels a judge to exercise his mental power and form an opinion based on his knowledge of abstract laws and regulations governing the issues at hand. It is one thing to have the knowledge of the laws of jurisprudence and the rights of various people, and quite another to arrive at a definite decision as to which rule is applicable to a particular issue. It all leads us to believe that the word, *arāka* (translated here as "has shown you") in the clause, "that

you may judge between the people by means of that which God has shown you", actually means creation of opinion in his mind and leading him to correct decision, rather than teaching him abstract laws and general rules.

The verse in this context means: Surely God has revealed the Book to you and taught you its laws and regulations; and then has allowed you to exercise your opinion which He has created in you in order that you may judge between the people and thus dispel their strife and dispute.

***...and be not an advocate on behalf of the treacherous*:** The sentence is in conjunction with the preceding one, which, although a declarative one, has the sense of an imperative; the meaning thus will be as follows: Judge between them and do not be an advocate of the treacherous. *al-Khasīm* (advocate) is the one who speaks in favor of a claim, etc. The sentence orders the Prophet not to defend the treacherous and dishonest ones, as it would result in nullification of the right of the rightful claimants.

The order to judge between them is unrestricted and general; therefore the second order (which is in conjunction with it) gives the connotation that treachery and dishonesty too refers to general transgression against the others' rights, that it is not restricted to breach of trust only. (Of course, sometimes a particular clause may be placed in conjunction with a general one because of some special reasons, but there is no such reason here at all. We shall further explain it later on.)

وَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

(4:106) ***And ask forgiveness of Allah; surely Allah is forgiving, Merciful.***

The literal meaning of *al-istighfār* is to want to hide, although here it has been as usual translated as asking forgiveness. However, in this context it has been used in the literal meaning; and apparently it tells the Prophet to ask God to keep in him under cover the natural human tendency of inclining towards desire or violation of others' rights. It has repeatedly been explained that *al-ʾafw* and *al-maghfirah* are used in the divine speech for various connotations, all of which may be combined under the heading "moving away somehow from truth or justice".

The meaning, therefore, is as follows: Do not be advocate of the treacherous, nor be inclined to them; ask God to help you in this endeavour, and protect you from defending their treachery and keep you free from coming under the influence of desire. This meaning is clearly understood when we

look at a later verse which says: *And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, a party of them had certainly designed to mislead you and they do not mislead but their own souls, and they shall not harm you in any way.* It clearly says that they cannot harm the Prophet even if they tried their utmost to arouse his feelings in order that he might opt for injustice and neglect the justice. They can never succeed in this endeavour, because the Prophet was under divine protection from such harmful influence, and God was guarding him [in his words and actions]; he did not commit injustice in his judgements, and was not liable to partiality; nor did he follow his desires. It would certainly be a gross injustice and a reprehensible misdeed if one was to differentiate, when sitting for judgement, between strong and weak, friend and foe, believer and unbeliever, near and far. In this context, the Prophet was ordered to "ask forgiveness" not because he had committed any sin which could have brought evil consequences, nor does it show that he was about to do any such improper thing. It only says that the Prophet should ask God to give him power to subjugate his desires; and undoubtedly he was always in need of such divine protection and was never independent of God, although he was *maʾsūm* (protected, sinless); and God does what He wills.

This 'protection' covers all that comes under the headings of obedience and disobedience, all actions for which one may be praised or blamed. But it does not cover actual happenings. In other words, the verses show that the Prophet was protected from following his desires and inclining towards falsity. But they do not prove whatever judgement a judge gives, based of the rules and regulations enacted for judicial procedures (e.g., the claimant's responsibility is to bring the proof, and the defendant has only to deny on oath) invariably always agree with reality and truth, or that this procedure always gives victory to the rightful person and brings defeat to the wrongful party. Nor do the laid down rules always lead to truth and justice. These procedures and regulation are meant to distinguish between truth and falsity in most of the cases, but not always; and what applies to majority of the cases only, cannot be deemed to apply to all cases.

It becomes clear from the aforesaid explanations where an exegete has gone wrong. He says that the Prophet was ordered to ask forgiveness of God, because he had intended to defend and protect that treacherous man (mentioned in the verse), as that man's people had requested the Prophet to be his advocate against a Jew. But this exegesis is wrong, because that putative intention would show that he had come under their

reprehensible influence, while God says that they could not influence him in any harmful manner.

وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

(4:107) ***And do not plead on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls; surely Allah does not love him who is treacherous, sinful.***

It is said that unfaithful action has been linked to "their souls" because in the end its evil consequences turn back to the souls. Alternatively, it may count every sin as a treachery against one's own soul, as it has been counted as an injustice against it. Also God says: *Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully towards your souls* (2:187).

If we look at this verse in conjunction with other Qur'anic realities that all the believers are like one soul, and one's property in a way belongs to the whole group inasmuch as all are responsible to guard and protect it against loss and waste, then possibly it may be inferred from this verses that a believer usurping or stealing another's property, in fact, acts unfaithfully towards his own soul, his own self.

The divine words: *surely Allah does not love him who is treacherous, sinful,* shows that those transgressors persistently indulged in their treachery. It is further emphasized by the word, *athīmā* which, being an adjective with force of a noun, shows that they were deep-dyed in sins. Even the clause, "act unfaithfully to their souls", alludes to their continued faithlessness; the same is the implication of the adjective, 'treacherous', which has been used [in 4:105], rather than the phrase, "those who act unfaithfully". (The latter has been used in 8:71 where it says: *so indeed they acted unfaithfully towards Allah before, but He gave* [you] *mastery over them.*)

It appears from these associations among others that the verse, in context of the reason of its revelation, means as follows: Do not be an advocate on behalf of these people and do not defend them, because they are persistent in their treachery, deep-dyed in unfaithfulness, submerged in sins and transgressions; but God does not love treacherous and sinful persons. This connotation supports the stories that the verses were revealed about Abū Ṭu'mah b. al-Ubayriq, as will be seen in Traditions.

Apart from that story, the verse gives the following guidance: While

sitting for judgement, do not support those who persistently indulge in treachery and deceit; because God does not like treacherous and sinful people. As He dislikes big treacheries, He also dislikes small ones. If it was possible for God to like small treachery, it would have been possible to like big ones too. As it is, God forbids to defend and support small treachery as He forbids supporting big treachery. Of course, if one acted unfaithfully in one case, and later lodged a case about another matter in which he was on the right, then the verse does not forbid to defend him, and such advocacy and support is not covered by the sentence: *and be not an advocate on behalf of the treacherous*.

يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّتُونَ مَا
لَا يَرْضَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

(4:108) ***They hide themselves from men and do not hide themselves from Allah, and He is with them when they meditate by night words which please Him not, and Allah encompasses what they do.***

This is one more indication that the verses 105 to 126 were revealed in one context regarding a particularly event and that is the one alluded to in the verse: *And whoever commits a fault or a sin, then accuses of it one innocent…* (4:112). Obviously, hiding can only be tried for deeds like theft, etc., blame for which could be laid at the other's door. It shows that the event mentioned in the verse under discussion and the preceding one is the same which is described in 4:112.

No one can hide oneself from God, because nothing in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Him. Consequently, its opposite, that is, not hiding from God, too is a compulsory thing, beyond the orbit of man's power. As such one cannot be blamed or shamed for it as the verse seems to imply. However, "hiding himself" here is apparently an indirect allusion to "feeling shy". That is why the clause, "and [they] do not hide themselves from God", is followed by the clause, "and He is with them when they meditate by night words which please Him not". It exposes their conspiracy which they hatched at night in order that they could deny before the people any involvement in it, and during which they talked what was not pleasing to God. Then the verse goes on to declare, "and God encompasses what they do". It shows that God encompasses them in all conditions, including the time when they committed the crime. These

two provisos describe a general condition after the specific restriction; and actually give at first a particular reason why they cannot hide from God, and then describe a general reason.

هَا أَنْتُمْ هَٰؤُلَاءِ جَادَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَمَنْ يُجَادِلُ اللَّهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَمْ مَنْ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

(4:109) ***Behold! You are they who Fplead for them in this world's life, but who will plead for them with Allah on the Resurrection Day, or who shall be their protector?***

The question shows futility of people's pleading for the treacherous ones; such pleading, even if of any use, may help them only in this life, which has no value in the eyes of God. But who will plead for them or argue on their behalf in the life hereafter, which is particularly honored in God's presence, and where they will really need some advocate to support their cause? There will be no one then to look after their affairs or to explain away their misdeeds.

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

(4:110) ***And whoever does evil or acts unjustly to his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allah, He shall find Allah Forgiving, Merciful***

It is an exhortation to those treacherous persons to return to their Lord and ask His forgiveness. This placing of evil and injustices as two alternatives and ascending from evil to injustice may reflect on the fact that evil is done to others while injustice is ascribed to one's own soul. Or it may be because evil is less serious than injustice—not unlike a small sin *vis-à-vis* a great sin. And God knows better.

This and the following two verses all together throw light on the same theme, that is, description of the sin resulting from a man's action; and each in its turn looks at a particular aspect of the sin:

This (first) verse explains that when a man commits a sin, it is his own soul which is held responsible for it and it is recorded in his scrolls of deed. However, he still has been given an opportunity to return to God and beseech Him for forgiveness. If he does so, he will find God Forgiving, Merciful.

The next verse reminds man that the sin he commits affects his own

soul; and it cannot be transferred to another person, by means of false accusation, etc.

The third verse explains that if, after committing a fault or sin, he accuses an innocent person for it, that accusation will be a new sin or crime, over and above the original one.

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١١١﴾

(4:111) ***And whoever commits a sin, he only commits it against his own soul; and Allah is Knowing, Wise.***

As explained above, this verse is connected with the next one, and as such is a sort of preamble to it. The clause, "he only commits it against his own soul", focuses the responsibility on the perpetrator, and admonishes those who, after committing a crime, try to put the blame on the others. The meaning therefore is as follows: Whoever commits a crime, he does so against his own soul, and it is not written in someone else's account; it is he who has done it, not the other man, even if he accuses that man of it, and even if that another man had undertaken to carry that load on his shoulders. God is Knowing, He knows that the sin was done by this sinner, and not by that accused man; and He is Wise, He does not hold responsible for a sin except that actual sinner, and does not put the burden of a crime except on the actual criminal. God says:… *for it is (the benefit of) what it has earned, and upon it (the evil of) what it has wrought…* (2:286);… *and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another…* (6:164); *And those who disbelieve say to those who believe: "Follow our path and we will bear your wrongs." And never shall they be the bearer of any of their wrongs; most surely they are liars* (29:12).

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُبِينًا ﴿١١٢﴾

(4:112) ***And whoever commits a fault or a sin, then accuses of it one innocent, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin.***

al-Rāghib says in *Mufradātu al-Qur'an* : "When one wants to do one thing and inadvertently does another, it is said, he did a mistake; and if it happens as he had intended, it is said, he has found [his target]. Also if

he does something not good, or intends to do something unworthy, he is said to have done a mistake. That is why they say in Arabic: 'He found (that is, did) the mistake [which he wanted to do]; he missed the right [which he wanted to do]; he found the right; he missed the error or mistake.' Thus the word is used for opposite meanings, and one must ponder before deciding its intended connotation."

Again he says: "*al-Khatīʾah* (mistake, fault) and *al-Sayyiʾah* (evil, sin) have nearly similar connotations. But *al-khatīah* is mostly used when the result that appeared was not the one actually intended; for example, one fires at a wild animal and kills a man, or drinks liquor and commits a crime while intoxicated. Now, the cause of that effect can be either lawful or unlawful. If the cause was unlawful, like drinking liquor, the resulting effect or crime cannot be pardoned; however if it was lawful, like firing at a wild animal, [it might be dealt with leniently]. God says: *there is no blame on you concerning that in which you made a mistake, but (concerning) that your hearts do purposely (blame may rest on you)* [33:5]; and He has said [in the verse under discussion]: *And whoever commits a fault or a sin*. Therefore, *al-khatīah* (fault), here means that mistake which just happened inadvertently."

I think that the word, *al-khatīah*, is an adjective which, because of frequent use, does not need any noun. In this respect it is similar to *al-musībah* (misfortune), *al-raziyyah* (tragedy) and *al-Salīqah* (inborn disposition) inasmuch as all these are adjectives but are used as nouns. The paradigm (*faʾīl*) shows the stocking up and permanency of the root-word; thus *al-khatīah* is an action in which *al-khatāʾ* (mistake) is permanently settled down; while *al-khatāʾ* refers to an unintended mistake like manslaughter. This was the original meaning. Then it was extended to include those actions which a man would not do if he had not lost his natural uprightness. This extended meaning covers every disobedience and its effect. Thus *al-khatīah* is that action or its effect which was done inadvertently (and it will not be called a disobedience) or which one should not have intended (and it will be counted as a disobedience or its effect).

God has ascribed *al-khatīah* (fault) in this verse to *al-kasb* (earning; translated here as 'commits'). Therefore, it must mean the fault which is a disobedience. As such, it means the fault done intentionally; although it was an action which a right-minded man should not have intended.[1]

1 Here the author rebuts the last part of al-Rāghib's explanation. (Trans.)

It was explained under the verse 2:219: (*Say: "In both of them is a great sin"*) that sin is an action whose evil consequences deprive man of many good and virtues, e.g., drinking liquor, gambling, stealing—the evils which prevent man from acquiring this life's good, and degrade him in the society to such an extent that people do not place any trust in him and do not believe him.[1]

The verse under discussion mentions fault and sin as alternatives and ascribes both to 'earning', that is, wilful action (*And whoever commits a fault or a sin*). Clearly both have been used in their particular meanings. Thus the meaning will be as follows: Whoever commits a fault whose effect is perpetual (like, unlawful murder or theft) and then puts its blame on an innocent man, then certainly he has burdened himself with a fresh calumny and another clear sin.

The word *al-ramiyy* (translated here as 'accuses') literally means shooting an arrow; and the liability of the sin of calumny is described as being burdened with it. The two together present a fine metaphor: The false accuser shoots the arrow at the innocent victim and kills him; and this crime burdens him with a load which he cannot throw away and which prevents him from every good throughout his life.

From the preceding explanations, it may easily be understood why in these verses disobedience has been variously named sin, fault and evil, or injustice, treachery and misleading. Each word perfectly fits the context where it is placed.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَهَمَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ يُضِلُّوكَ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۖ وَمَا يَضُرُّونَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ ۚ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٣﴾

(4:113) ***And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, a party of them had certainly designed to mislead you and they do not mislead but their own souls, and they shall not harm you in any way, and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know, and Allah's grace***

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng. transl.), vol.3, p.280.

on you is very great.

The context shows that this design of theirs to mislead the Prophet refers to their attempts to urge him to defend and support those whom God has named in the beginning as "the treacherous". Obviously this group is the same whom God has addressed in these words: *Behold! you are they who plead for them in this world's life…* This fits on the people of Abū Tu'mah, as will be described later.

…and they do not mislead but their own souls and they shall not harm you in any way…: The two sentences taken together clearly show that their attempt to mislead the Prophet, harms their own souls only; it does not affect him in any way. They have mislead themselves through their evil designs; it is nothing but a sin and every sin is delusion.

This expression also has another connotation, given in the exegesis of chapter 3, verse 69: *and they lead not astray but themselves, and they do not perceive*.[1] But that connotation is not fit in this context.

The verse says: *and they shall not harm you in any way, and Allah has revealed to you the Book*; it absolutely dismisses their ability to harm the Prophet; it appears to be qualified by the clause: *and Allah has revealed to you the Book*, which is a circumstantial clause related to the pronoun 'you' in the preceding clause. Thus, it totally rebuts the idea that anyone can harm the Prophet in any way whether in knowledge or action.

…and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know…: As pointed out above it gives the reason why they cannot harm the Prophet in any way. Or may be it shows the reason of the full statement, *and they do not mislead but their own souls, and they shall not harm you in any way.* In any case, this revelation of the Book and this teaching of the Wisdom is the reason why their attempts to mislead the Prophet can never succeed. This is the foundation of his *al-'Ismah* (sinlessness, infallibility).

The Meaning of *al-'Ismah*

The verse apparently shows that the basic factor from which *al-'Ismah* emanates is a sort of knowledge which prevents the knower from indulging in sin and mistake. In other words, knowledge prevents one from going astray. Likewise, all good characteristics, like bravery chastity and

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng. transl.) vol.6, pp.107-9.

generosity are the forms of knowledge which are deep rooted in psyche and create their effects and at the same time prevent one from indulging in their opposites like cowardice or rashness, lack of desire or greed, miserliness or extravagance.

Although beneficial knowledge and perfect sagacity keep one clean and prevent his falling in quagmire of depravity or being soiled with filth of sins, (as we see in the people who have knowledge and wisdom, and steeped in piety and religion). However, it is such a cause as brings its effects most of the times but not always. The same is the case with all material and natural causes which are found in the universe. Look at anyone who is perfect in any field; you will find that his perfection does not protect him from mistake always and without any fail. It is a common trait of all causes which we see and observe.

The reason is that man possesses various powers of consciousness and at times some of them push the others to the back of the mind and man becomes oblivious of those factors. A man with faculty of piety will not be inclined to follow base desires as long as he is conscious of the virtue of his piety; but a time may come when the fire of desire is inflamed and he being tempted by that desire becomes oblivious of the virtue of piety or his consciousness of piety becomes weak, and he commits what piety would never tolerate and indulges in base desires. The same is the case with all conscious causes found in man. Otherwise, man will never deviate from the effects of any of these causes as long as the cause remains intact. In short, whenever man goes against the dictates of virtue, it happens because some causes overpower the others and man forgets the dictates of virtue. But as for this faculty which is called the power of *al-ʾIsmah* it is a conscious cause emanating from knowledge which can never be overpowered. Had it been like other consciousness and comprehensions, it could have sometimes failed and deviated from the right path. This knowledge is not like other knowledge and comprehensions which we are familiar with and which can be acquired and learned from teachers.

God has pointed to this unique knowledge in this talk addressed particularly to His Prophet when he says: *and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom and He has taught you what you did not know*. It is an exclusive talk which we cannot properly understand because we have not tasted this type of knowledge and consciousness. However, if we look at some of the Divine speeches—for example: *Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Jibrīl—for surely he brought it down to your heart by Allah's*

command…" (2:97). *The faithful spirit has descended with it upon your heart that you may be of the warners in plain Arabic language* (26:193-5)—we will clearly see that this sending down of the Book is rooted in knowledge. Some other verses show that this sending down of the Book refers to revelation and talking as may be seen in the following verses: *He has made plain to you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you and that We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus…* (42:13); *Surely, We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him…* (4:163); *"… I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me…"* (6:50); *"… I only follow what is revealed to me from my Lord…* " (7:203).

It is inferred from these various verses that *al-inzāl* (sending down) means revelation of the Book and the Wisdom—and it is a sort of divine teaching to the Prophet. Nevertheless, the teaching referred to by the words: *and He has taught you what you did not know,* is something quite different from the teaching through revelation of the Book and the Wisdom; the verses deal with the judicial decisions of the Prophet in various events and in the litigations which are brought to him for judgement, and that judgement is given by his own opinion. It has nothing to do with the Book and the Wisdom—although it depends on them—it is the result of his own view and opinion.

It appears from the above that the sending down and the teaching in the words: *and Allah has sent down to you the Book and Wisdom and He has taught you what you did not know*, refer to two categories of knowledge: one, teaching through revelation and sending of the faithful spirit to the Prophet; two, teaching through inspiration created in the heart and the secret divine thought without the agency of any angel. This is what is supported by the traditions which have come to us about the prophetic knowledge. Therefore, the sentence: *and He has taught you what you did not know*, means: God has given you a particular knowledge which you could never get through the normal means which help man in learning acquired knowledge; that particular knowledge is given only by God to His chosen ones.

Clearly, this Divine gift which we call *al-ʾIsmah* is a sort of knowledge and consciousness which is totally different from all other types of knowledge inasmuch as this knowledge is never overpowered by any other faculty; rather it overpowers all other faculties and uses them according to its own wisdom. In this way, it fully protects the holder of *al-ʾIsmah*

from going astray and committing mistakes. It has come in the traditions that the Prophet and the Imāms do have a spirit which is called the Holy Spirit; and it supports them and protects them from sin and mistake. It is this Spirit which is mentioned in the verse: *And thus did We reveal to you a Spirit by Our command. You did not know what the Book was nor (what) the faith (was), but We made it a light guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants* (42:52). (This meaning may be inferred if we take the apparent meaning of the verse that a guiding Spirit was sent to the Prophet) Similarly there is the verse: *And We made them Imāms who guided (people) by Our command and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of the prayer and the giving of the alms and Us (alone) did they worship* (21:73). We shall explain in its place the meaning of this verse, God willing, that it refers to the support given by the Holy Spirit to the Imāms for doing good and worshipping God.

The above explanations also show that the Book mentioned in the verse: *and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom and has taught you what you did not know*, refers to the revelations sent for removing the peoples' conflicts; as was mentioned in the verse: *Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they differed…* (2:213), as was explained in the second volume of this book.[1]

The wisdom mentioned in the verse refers to all Divine cognition sent through revelation which were beneficial for this world and the hereafter. The sentence: *and He has taught you what you did not know*, refers to something totally different from general cognition obtained from the Book and the Wisdom.

The above explanations show the shortcomings of some exegetes regarding the exegesis of this verse. Some have taken the Book as the Qur'an and the Wisdom as the commandments found in it and have said that: *what you did not know* refers to the sharī'ah and the knowledge of the unseen. Others have explained the Book and the Wisdom as the Qur'an and the sunnah *and what you did not know* as the sharī'ah and the stories of the previous prophets and other such informations. There are other such explanations; but what we have written in the explanation shows how weak such other opinions are.

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng. transl.), vol.3, pp.167-227.

…and Allah's Grace on you is very great: It reminds the Prophet of the Divine favors.

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِنْ نَجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ
بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا
عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

(4:114) ***There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people; and whoever does this seeking Allah's pleasure, We will give him a mighty reward***

al-Rāghib has said:

> "*Nājaytuhu* (I whispered in his ear). Its literal meaning is that you remain alone with him in a *najwah* (rising ground)." Thus *al-najwā* means secret counselling, whispered talk. Sometimes the word is used for conspirators or whisperers themselves. God says: *when they take counsel secretly* (17:47).

The talk, "there is no good in most of their secret counsels", reverts to the preceding sentence, *when they meditate by night words which please Him not,* because all these verses are connected together. Here it condemns all secret consultations whether they are done at night or in daytime. The statement that "there is no good in it" covers all secret counselling or plotting even if it is not done during night time. The same is the coming words: *whoever acts hostilely to the Messenger;* God did not say, whoever whispers secretly to become hostile to the Messenger, because the described order is for acting hostilely, no matter whether it is done after secret whispering or not.

The exception, *except (in his) who enjoins charity…* is isolated. The meaning: but whoever orders charity or goodness there is some good in his order. Secret counselling to do good work has been called enjoinment and order; it is a metaphorical expression. God has mentioned three good works which secret whispering enjoins: charity, goodness and reconciliation between the people. Charity is a part of goodness, yet God has mentioned it separately because it is the most perfect and prominent example of goodness and by nature it entails secret consultation.

…and whoever does this seeking Allah's pleasure, We will give him a

mighty reward: It categorizes secret counselling describing how it may earn good reward or punishment. It shows what goodness is found in good secret counselling and as for the objectionable counselling, why it is not good.

In short, it shows that those who indulge in secret whispering are of two types: One, there are those who do it seeking God's pleasure; he calls to goodness or strives to bring reconciliation between people seeking nearness to God, and God will surely give him a great reward; two, there are others who plan secretly acting hostilely to the Messenger and following a way other than that of the believers. His recompense is that God leaves him into what he himself has chosen, makes him enter hell and it is an evil resort.

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾

(4:115) ***And whoever acts hostilely to the Messenger after that guidance has become manifest to him, and follows other than the way of the believers, We will turn him to that to which he has (himself) turned and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort.***

al-Mushāqqah (acting hostilely) is derived from *shiqq* (a part removed from a whole). Thus, *al-mushāqqah* and *al-shiqāq* show that you are in the opposite side of your fellow's. It is a metaphorical way to describe difference and disagreement. Acting hostilely to the Messenger after manifestation of the guidance means acting against the Messenger and indulging in his disobedience. Therefore, the phrase, "and follows other than the way of the believers", further explains hostility to the Messenger. The way of the believers means obeying the Messenger because his obedience is the obedience of God. God says: *whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah* (4:80).

The believers are united in the belief and their way is the unity on the obedience of God and His Messenger—you may say in short "the obedience of His Messenger". This preserves the unity of their way as God has said: *But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds fast to Allah he indeed is guided to the straight path. O you who believe! Fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him and do not die unless*

you are Muslims. And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided… (3:101-3).We have explained this verse in volume three of this book.[1] Also God has said: *And (know) that this is My Path, the Right one therefore follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way; this He has enjoined you with that you may guard (against evil)* (6:153). As the way of God is the way of piety, the way of guarding against evil, and the believers are called to that way; so when they unite on that way they will cooperate with one another in piety. God says:… *and help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression…* (5:2). The verse, as you see, forbids the believers to disobey God and to create friction in the Islamic Society; and this is what we have explained about the way of the believers.

The meaning of the verse (*and whoever acts hostilely to the Messenger after that Guidance has become manifest to him and follows other than the way of the believers*) is similar to the verse which says: *O you who believe! When you confer together in private, do not give to each other counsel of sin and revolt and disobedience to the Messenger, and give to each other counsel of goodness and piety…* (58:9).

The phrase, "We will turn him to that to which he has (himself) turned", means that We will let him continue in the behavior he has chosen for himself and will let him follow other than the way of the believers; as God says: *All do We aid—these as well as those—out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20).

…and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort: The conjunction, 'and' shows that the whole episode, that is, turning him to his own chosen way and sending him to hell is a single Divine order, some parts will be implemented in this world (letting him proceed to his chosen path) and some will appear in the life hereafter and that is sending him to hell; and it is an evil resort.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١١٦﴾

(4:116) ***Surely Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and He forgives what is besides this to whom He pleases; and whoever associates any thing with Allah, he indeed***

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng. transl.), vol.6, pp.271-8.

strays off into a remote error.

Apparently, the verse explains the reason of the preceding statement: *We will turn him to that to which he has (himself) turned and make him enter hell*; because all these verses are interconnected. This verse proves that being hostile to the Messenger is the same as associating something to God, and God surely does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him. The same idea may be inferred from the following verses of ch.47: *Surely those who disbelieve and turn away from Allah's way and oppose the Messenger after that guidance has become clear to them cannot harm Allah in any way, and He will make null their deeds* (32). *O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and do not let your deeds be forfeited* (33). *Surely those who disbelieve and turn away from Allah's way, then they die while they are unbelievers, Allah will by no means forgive them* (34). Apparently, the verse 34 gives the reason of the order given in verse 33 regarding obedience of God and of His Messenger. Clearly, disobedience to God and His Messenger is a disbelief which will never be forgiven; in other words, it is nothing but polytheism.

The addition of the phrase, "and He forgives what is besides this to whom He pleases", aims at completing the talk; also it shows how great is this cursed sin, that is, hostility to the Messenger. We have explained shortly this verse at the end of the volume four.[1]

إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنَاثًا وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا ﴿١١٧﴾

(4:117) *They do not call besides Him on any thing but females, and they do not call on any thing but a rebellious Satan.*

al-Ināth is plural of *al-unthā* (female). They say in Arabic, *anatha al-hadīd* (the iron became soft). *Anatha al-makān (*the place brought out its vegetation fast). This word shows the idea of passivity, of being influenced, and that is why a female is called *unthā*. This verse describes the idols and all those who are worshipped besides God as females, because all of them are manipulated and influenced by man; they have no power to affect any thing which their worshippers expect from them. God says: *Surely those whom you call upon besides Allah cannot create a fly, though they should all gather for it, and should the fly snatch away anything from*

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng. transl.), vol.8, pp.250-3.

them they could not take it back from it, weak are the invoker and the invoked. They have not estimated Allah with the estimation that is due to Him; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty (22:73-74). Also He says: *And they have taken besides Him gods who do not create anything while they are themselves created and they control not for themselves any harm or profit, and they control not death, nor life, nor raising (the dead) to life* (25:3).

Apparently, the femininity points to utter passivity which is the characteristic of a created thing *vis-à-vis* the Creator. This interpretation is better than the one which some people have written that the word females refers to Lāt, ʿUzzā and Manāt, etc. every tribe had its own idol which was called the goddess of that tribe; it was said either because their names were of feminine gender or because they were made of inanimate matters, which are generally given feminine gender. But this interpretation does not conform with the exclusivity which is found in the verse, "they do not call besides Him on anything but females", because among those who are worshipped besides God there are some males like Jesus Christ, Barahma and Buddha.[1]

***…and they do not call on anything but a rebellious Satan*:** *al-Marīd* (stripped of every good; naked). al-Baydāwī has said: *"al-Mārid* and *al-marīd*: he who is unrelated with any good. The root word denotes touching and that is why they say *sarhun mumarrad* (plastered castle), *ghulāmun amrad* (beardless boy), *shajaratun mardāʾ* (leafless tree)."

Apparently, this sentence explains the preceding one; 'calling' metaphorically denotes worshipping because worship had spread among people for calling the deity to fulfil their needs. God has given to obedience the name of worship as He says: *Did I not charge you, O Children of Adam! that you should not serve the Satan? Surely he is your open enemy, and that you should serve Me! This is the right way* (36:60-61). The sentence denotes that when they worship anything other than God they actually worship and call the rebellious Satan because it is done in obedience to his suggestion.

لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ ۘ وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا ﴿١١٨﴾

(4:118) ***Allah has cursed him; and he said: "Most certainly I will take of Thy servants an appointed portion.***

1 Barahma is a mythical figure; and Buddha is not worshipped as God because Buddhism doesn't have any concept of Divinity. Rāmā and Krishnā would serve as better example

al-La'n (to keep away from mercy). It is another adjective for the Satan and describes the reason of the previous adjective, 'rebellious'.

…and he said: "Most certainly I will take of Thy servants an appointed portion: It points to what God has quoted from the Satan's claim: *Then by Thy Might I will surely lead them astray, all, except Thy servants from among them, the purified ones* (38:82-83). The phrase, "of Thy servants", confirms that those who go astray are even then God's servants. They cannot discard this servitude; He is their Lord who will decide about them whatever He pleases.

وَلَأُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَلَأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَلَآمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ آذَانَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَلَآمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُبِينًا ﴿١١٩﴾

(4:119) ***And most certainly I will lead them astray and excite in them vain desires, and bid them so that they shall slit the ears of the cattle, and most certainly I will bid them so that they shall alter Allah's creation;" and whoever takes the Satan for a guardian rather than Allah he indeed shall suffer a manifest loss.***

The phrase, "they shall slit the ears of the cattle", describes the custom of the Arabs in the days of Ignorance when they used to slit the ears of a particular type of she-camel and bullocks to make their meat unlawful for eating. All the customs mentioned in the verse are errors and straying. First, it is said that Satan will lead them astray; it is a general statement; then some examples of that straying are given for putting more emphasis on them. The Satan says: "Most certainly I will lead them astray by making them worship other than God and encouraging them to commit sins. I will excite in them vain desires which will divert their attention from their obligations and duties. I will bid them to slit the ears of the cattle and exhort them to make unlawful what God has made lawful, and I will order them so that they shall alter God's creation." This last phrase may denote castration and various types of mutilations as well as sodomy and lesbianism.

Possibly, alteration of God's creations may connote going against the natural law and discarding the upright religion. God says: *Then set your face upright for religion in the right state—the nature made by Allah in*

which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion (30:30).

When one calls the Satan, that is, obey his commands, God counts it as taking the Satan for a guardian, as He says: "And whoever takes the Satan for a guardian rather than God he indeed shall suffer a manifest loss." It should be noted that God has not said: Whosoever the Satan is his guardian; because the previous verses have clearly shown that the guardian is God alone and no one else has any guardianship on anything even if someone takes him as his guardian.

يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيهِمْ ۖ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ عَنْهَا مَحِيصًا ﴿١٢١﴾

(4:120-121) ***He gives them promises and excites vain desires in them; and the Satan does not promise them but to deceive. These are they whose abode is hell, and they shall not find any refuge from it.***

The context shows that it gives the reason to the preceding verse, *he indeed shall suffer a manifest loss.* What loss can be more manifest than the one who changes real happiness and perfection of creation with false promises and imaginary desires. God says: *And (as for) those who disbelieves, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water, until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full; and Allah is quick in reckoning* (24:39). The promises refer to direct Satanic temptations and desires spring up from those temptations whose imaginary beauties enrapture the mind. That is why God says, "and the Satan does not promise them but to deceive". It should be noted that the Satanic promise has been called deception but not the desires.

Then their end result is described in the next verse: "These are they whose abode is hell, and they shall not find any refuge from it". *Mahīs* (the place to escape; translated here as refuge).

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا ۚ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا ﴿١٢٢﴾

(4:122) ***And (as for) those who believe and do good, We will make***

them enter into gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein for ever; (it is) a promise of Allah, true (indeed); and who is truer of word than Allah?

This describes the believers' position to complete the picture by giving a clear contrast with the unbelievers. In the verse, pronouns have changed from second person plural to the third person. The reason is that God wants to show the importance of the situation and its greatness by using the proper name, God, instead of pronouns of second plural.

There is one more fine point in the phrase, "We will make them enter into gardens"; it indicates that soon they will be present before God Almighty and He will not conceal Himself from His believing servants as He is their guardian.

…And who is truer of word than Allah? It presents a contrast with what has been said in the preceding verse about the Satanic promises that it is nothing but deception while God's promise is a reality and His words true.

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِيِّ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ۗ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾

(4:123) ***(This) shall not be in accordance with your vain desires not in accordance with the vain desires of the People of the Book; whoever does evil, he shall be requited with it, and besides Allah he will find for himself neither a guardian nor helper***

The talk returns to the topic it had started with. It gives in short the conclusion of the detailed speech. It has been narrated about the actions and speeches of some believers who insisted before the Prophet that he must take their side, and help them against their opposite parties in their mutual conflict and litigation. It shows that they thought that by believing in God and His Messenger they had done a favor to God and established a right over the Prophet, by which God and His Messenger were obliged to take their side and give judgement in their favor, no matter whether they are on right or on wrong, and whether that judgement would be just or unjust. It is the same phenomenon which we find in the followers of the leaders of error and the retinues of oppressive rulers; each of them, while humiliating himself before the leader and obeying him, thinks that by attaching himself to the leader he has done a favor to him; as a result he

believes that he has a right on his leader because of which the leader must protect his interests and compulsorily give him precedence over others.

Also, the People of the Book entertained the same ideas as God narrates in His Book about them: *And the Jews and the Christians say: "We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones"* (5:18). Also He says: *And they say: "Be Jews or Christians, you will be on the right course"* (2:135). Again He says: *This is because they say: "There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (to reproach)"* (3:75).

God has refuted such ideas of that group of believers and joined them with the People of the Book. God has called these assumptions vain desires, because like the desires, these presumptions are merely imaginary forms which have no reality outside the mind. God tells them: 'O group of the Muslims! It is not going to be in accordance with your vain desires nor with the vain desires of the People of the Book; it all depends on deeds; if your deeds are good you will get good reward and if evil, then evil.' The evil has been mentioned in the verse before the good deeds because they had committed great sins.

Whoever does evil he shall be requited with it and besides Allah he will find for himself neither a guardian nor helper: The sentence begins without any conjunction. It means it is a separate speech; and in a way gives reply to the following unasked question: If entering into the fold of Islam and true belief does not bring every good to a man and does not protect his interests in life then what is the way and where will the man go? And the same is the situation in Judaism and Christianity. In reply God declares: "Whoever does evil he shall be requited with it and besides God he will find for himself neither a guardian nor helper; and whoever does from good deeds,… "

The verse, "he shall be requited with it", is general and covers worldly punishments prescribed by the Islamic laws, like retaliation for criminals, cutting of fingers for thief and stoning or whipping for fornicator, etc., as well as the punishments in the hereafter which God has promised in His Book and through His Prophet.

This generality fits perfectly with the occasion of the revelation of these verses. It has been described that the verses were revealed concerning a theft which some Muslims had committed and had accused a Jew or a Muslim for it and then insisted before the Prophet that he should give judgement against the accused.

The words, "neither a guardian nor helper", are also general. No

guardian or helper can avert a punishment of a crime from the culprit; even the Prophet or Imām and the honor of Islam and religion cannot help in this matter. The punishment prescribed by God cannot be removed from the does of the evil by anyone. Also, it covers guardian and helper who would be able to remove from him the punishment in the hereafter except what the next verse mentions.

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾

(4:124) *And whoever does from good deeds whether male or female and he (or she) is a believer—these shall enter the garden, and they shall not be dealt with a jot unjustly*

This is the other alternative which describes the recompense of the doer of good deeds, that is, the garden. In this verse, God has attached a condition which restricts the recompense; and on the other side has given latitude which has expanded the circle of reward. It is the condition of being rewarded with the garden that the doer of a good deed should be a believer, because the reward stands face to face with good deed and an unbeliever has no good deed to his credit. God says:… *and if they had set up others (with Him) certainly what they did would have been forfeited* (6:88). Also, He said: *These are they who disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and His meeting, so their deeds become null, and therefore We will not set up a balance for them on the Day of Resurrection* (18:105).

On the other hand, God has said, "And whoever does from good deeds", the word 'from' indicates a part, and it means whoever does some of the good deeds. This expands the circle of the promise of the garden. If God had said: 'and whoever does good deeds' and the context requires precise description of the recompense—it would have meant that the garden was for a believer who performed all good deeds; but the Divine Grace has spread the good reward for every believer who performs some good deeds and if he has left any good deed undone or committed any sin, God will make it up through repentance or intercession, as He has said: *Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him and He forgives what is besides this to whom He pleases;…* (4:116); we have explained in detail about repentance while explaining the words of God: *Repentance with Allah is only for those who do evil in ignorance…*

(4:17) in the fourth volume[1]; and about intercession under the verse: *And be on the guard against a day when one soul shall not avail another in the least,* (2:48) in the first volume of this book[2].

Then God says: "whether male or female"; the Divine Decree covers males and females both without any difference of gender. This is totally opposite to the pretensions of ancient people of various religions and communities like India, Egypt and all the idol worshippers. They believed that whatever good deed the womenfolk did it was not credited to their account and they did not get any reward for their virtuous deeds. The same was the ideology of Judaism and Christianity: that all honor and respect is reserved for the men; and the women are disgraced in the eyes of God; there are shortcomings in their creation and they will not get full reward for their deeds. The Arabs' thinking was not much different from these superstitions. Therefore, God has made both sexes equally deserving for His Grace and said, "whether male of female".

Probably, it is for this reason that the sentence, "These shall enter the garden" is followed by, "and they shall not be dealt with a jot unjustly". The first sentence shows that the women do have their shares in the good reward like the men; and the second sentence shows that there shall be no excess or shortfall between their shares in quantity; as God has said: *so their lord accepted their prayer: "That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other…"* (3:195).

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
حَنِيفًا ۗ وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُحِيطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾

(4:125-126) ***And who has a better religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah? And he is the doer of good (to others) and follows the faith of Abraham, the upright one, and Allah took Abraham as a friend And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's; and Allah encompasses all things.***

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng. transl.), vol.8, pp.54-77.

2 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng. transl.), vol.1, pp.221-249.

It appears that this is a reply to an unspoken question: If the Islam of a Muslim or belief of the People of the Book has no effect in bringing the good to him and to protect his interest—in short, when belief in God and His signs is worthless and its existence and non-existence make no difference—then what is the honor of Islam? Or the privilege of faith? The reply is given that the religion's honor is a fact without any doubt. It cannot be doubted nor any wise man can be oblivious of its goodness. This ideal is hidden in the phrase, "And who has a better religion than he who submits himself entirely to God?" The question takes it for granted that there is goodness in the religion. Man cannot get himself freed from religion and the best of the religion is to submit oneself entirely to God who is the Owner of whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Man has to surrender himself to God and worship Him; also he should follow the faith of Abraham, the upright one, because that is the natural religion. And God took Abraham as a friend; Abraham was the first to submit himself entirely to God doing good to others and following the upright religion.

Nevertheless, no one should entertain the idea that the Divine friendship is like the friendship found between men which overshadows all right and wrong and opens for them the door of recklessness and despotism. God is the owner, not the owned, He encompasses all things and is not surrounded. He is not like the rulers, presidents and kings because when they get any authority over their servants or subjects, they hand over something of their own freedom in its lieu to the public. They overpower some groups with help of some others and rule over one people with help of the other people; when a time comes where their will is opposed by the public's will then they cannot hold their ground, they fall down and their helplessness is clearly seen by one and all.

It is to describe this idea that the speech ends with the sentence, "And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is God's, and God encompasses all things".

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Examining Narrations

(1) It is narrated by al-Qummī in his *al-Tafsīr* that all these verses were revealed about a group of the Helpers from Banū Ubayriq. There were three brothers, all hypocrites; Bashīr, Bishr and Mubashshir. They dug a hole in the wall of the uncle of Qatādah

b. al-Nuʿmān—and Qatādah was a *badrī*[1]– and stole food grain which he had stored for his family together with a sword and coat of mail.

(2) Qatādah complained about it to the Messenger of God and said "O Messenger of God, some people dug a hole in the wall of my uncle and took away the food grain he had saved for his family and a sword and a coat of mail, and they are the people of a bad family." A believer man, Lubayd b. Sahl, was with them when they were planning (the theft). Banū Ubayriq said to Qatādah, "This is the work of Lubayd b. Sahl." This news came to Lubayd's ears, he took his sword and went to them and said, "O Banū Ubayriq! Do you accuse me of the theft while you are more deserving for it? You are hypocrites, you lampoon the Messenger of God and ascribe the poems to the Quraysh. You must prove this (accusation), otherwise I will fill my sword with your blood." So, Banū Ubayriq talked with him in a friendly way and said to him, "You go back, may God have mercy on you; because you are free from this claim."

(3) Now, Banū Ubayriq approached a man from their clan, Usayd b. ʿUrwah by name; he was a good eloquent speaker. He went to the Messenger of God and said, "O Messenger of God! Qatādah b. al-Nuʿmān singled out a family of our clan, a distinguished people of high regard and good family tree, and he accused them of theft and charged them of what they are innocent of.[2]

Hearing this, the Messenger of God was grieved. Then Qatādah came to him, and looking at him the Messenger of God said, "You pointed out a distinguished family, a people of high honor and good family tree, and you accused them of theft". (In this way) he admonished him severely. Qatādah was grieved because of it and

1 One who participated in the battle of Badr with the Holy Prophet of Islam (*ed.*).

2 The next hadīth, narrated by same Qatādah, is almost identical to this one, with one difference: These two sentences, in the next narrative, end with the proviso, "without evidence of proof." That crucial phrase makes it clear why the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) listened to Usayd (Usayr) and why he admonished Qatādah. It was because Qatādah had not offered any evidence or proof for his case and his claim was untenable from legal point of view. *(tr.)*

went back to his uncle and said, "Oh, would that I had died and not spoken to the Messenger of God (in this matter); because he has talked to me in a way I did not like." His uncle said, "God is He Whose help to be sought."

(4) Then God sent down these verses to His Prophet about this incident: *Surely We have revealed the Book to you with the truth… when they meditate by night words which please Him not.* al-Qummī says: The word, 'words', here means deeds. God has used the word to indicate action: *Behold: You are they who plead for them in this world's life… And whoever commits a fault or sin then accuses of it one innocent*; al-Qummī said: Lubayd b. Sahl—*he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin*.

(5) The same *tafsīr* narrates: Abu al-Jārūd narrates from Abū Jaʾfar: "Some people from the near relatives of Bashīr said: 'Let us go to the Messenger of God, so that we should talk to him about our fellow or explain to him that our fellow is innocent.' When God revealed: *They hide themselves from men and do not hide themselves from Allah… who shall be their protector?* Then the clan of Bishr turned on him and said: 'O Bishr, seek forgiveness from God and repent to Him from the sins.' He said: 'I swear by whom I swear that nobody stole it except Lubayd.' Then the verses were revealed: *And whoever commits a fault or a sin then accuses of it one innocent he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin*.

Then Bishr renounced Islam and fled to Mecca and God revealed about the group who had come to the Prophet to plead for Bishr: *And were it not for Allah's Grace upon you and His mercy, a party of them had certainly designed to mislead you, and they do not mislead but their own souls, and they shall not harm you in any way, and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know, and Allah's grace on you is very great.* (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

(6) al-Suyūtī writes: al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, Abu al-Shaykh and al-Hākim (who said that this tradition is correct) have narrated from Qatādah b. al-Nuʾmān that he said: "There was a family in our clan who were called Banū Ubayriq—Bishr, Bashīr and Mubashshir. Bishr was a hypocrite. He used to compose poems satirizing the companions of the

Messenger of God and then ascribe it to some other Arabs. He used to say: 'That man has said this and this and that man has said so and so.' But when the companions of the Messenger of God heard that poem, they used to say, 'By God! no one has said this poem except this wretched one himself. Then he (Bishr) said: 'What! Whenever people say some poem they join together and say Ubayriq's son has said it!'"

(Qatādah) said: "They were a needy poor family before Islam and in Islam. The usual food of the people of Medina was dates and barley. If a man was well to do, and a caravan came from Syria loaded with while flour, that man would buy some of it and reserve it for himself. The other members of the family had to be content with date and barley. So, a loaded caravan arrived from Syria and my uncle, Rufāʾah Ibn Zayd, purchased a bag of the white flour and kept it in his attic room; and in that room were his arms—two coats of mail and two swords and things connected with them. Someone sneaked in the darkness of the night and dug into the wall of the attic and took the food and arms. In the morning, my uncle, Rufāʾah, came to me and said, 'O my nephew! do you know that someone sneaked to us during night and my attic has been dug into and they took our food and our arms!'"

He (Qatādah) continues: "We inquired in the neighborhood and asked the people. Somebody told us, 'We did see Banū Ubayriq lighting fire in the night and we are sure that it was lit only to bake some of your flour.' When we were inquiring in the neighborhood, Banū Ubayriq told us, 'By God! we don't think any one has done it except Lubayd b. Sahl'—he was a man of our clan who was a Muslim of good character. When Lubayd heard it, he raised his sword and went to Banū Ubayriq and said, 'What! I steal? By God! you should prove this accusation or the sword will mingle in your body.' Then they said, 'Go away, O man! By God! you are not the thief.' We continued our investigation in the neighborhood until we were sure that these Banū Ubayriq were the thieves. Then my uncle said to me, 'O my nephew, if you only go to the Messenger of God and inform him about it.'"

Qatādah said: "I came to the Messenger of God and said, 'O Messenger of God, a family among us, a loathsome people went to my uncle, Rufāʾah b. Zayd, and dug a hole in his attic and took

away his arm and food. They should return to us our arm. As for the food, we don't want it.' The Messenger of God said, 'I will look into this matter.' When Banū Ubayriq heard about it, they went to a man of their clan who was called Usayr b. ʿUrwah, and they told him of this development, and some people of the neighborhood also joined them. Now, they went to the Messenger of God and said, 'O Messenger of God! Qatādah b. an- Nuʿmān and his uncle proceeded against one of our families who are Muslims of good character, and they have accused them of theft without any evidence of proof.'"

Qatādah continues: "Then I came to the Messenger of God and talked to him. He said, 'You have proceeded against a family who have been described (to me) as Muslims of good character and you have accused them of theft without evidence of proof.'"

Qatādah says: "I came back and I wished that I would have lost some of my wealth but had not talked to the Messenger of God about it. Then my uncle, Rufāʿah, came to me and asked, 'O my nephew, what (progress) have you made?' I informed him of what the Messenger of God had told me. My uncle said, 'God is He Whose help to be sought.'"

Without any delay, the verses were revealed: *surely we have revealed the Book to you with the truth that you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has shown you; and be not advocate on behalf of the treacherous*, that is, Banū Ubayriq. *And ask forgiveness of Allah*, that is, from what you had said to Qatādah, *surely Allah is forgiving, merciful. And do not plead on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls… then asks forgiveness of Allah, He shall find Allah Forgiving, Merciful.* that is, if they ask forgiveness of God, He will forgive them. *And whoever commits a fault or a sin, then accuses of it one innocent, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin*—it refers to their accusation of Lubayd. *And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, a party of them had certainly designed to mislead you*—that is, Usayr b. ʿUrwah and His companions. *And they do not mislead but their own souls, and they shall not harm you in any way, and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know, and Allah's grace on you is very great. There is no good in most of their*

secret counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people; and whoever does this seeking Allah's pleasure, We will give him a mighty reward. When the verses were revealed the arms were brought to the Messenger of God and he returned them to Rufāʾah.

Qatādah said, "When I brought the arms to my uncle—he was of old age and I used to think that his faith was weak—when I brought the arms to him, he said, 'O my nephew, this is the path of God: Then I understood that his Islam was correct.'"

When the verses were revealed, Bishr went (to Mecca) and joined the polytheists. He stayed with Sulāfah bint Saʾd. Then God revealed the verses: *And whoever acts hostilely to the Messenger after that guidance has become manifest to him, and follows other than the way of the believers, We will turn him to that to which he has (himself) turned and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort. Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and He forgives what is besides this to whom He pleases; and whoever associates anything with Allah, he indeed strays off into a remote error.* When he stayed with Sulāfah, Hassān b. Thābit shot at her some lines of poetry. She took his (that is, Bishr's) baggage and putting it on her head, went out and threw it in the open valley and said, "You have brought to me the poem of Hassān as gift! You were never to bring any good to me." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: This theme is narrated through other chainsof narrators as well.

(7) The same author writes: Ibn Jarīr has narrated from Ibn Zayd about this verse: He said: "There was a man who stole an iron coat of mail and sword during the days of the Prophet and put the blame on a Jew. The Jew said, 'By God! I have not stolen it O Abu al-Qāsim! but it has been (wrongly) attributed to me.' There were some neighbors of the thief who claimed that he was blameless and they too accused the Jew. Also they said, 'O Messenger of God! Surely, this Jew is a wicked person. He does not believe in God, nor in your prophethood.' This continued until the Prophet spoke to the Jew on this matter.

"Thus, God censored the Prophet and revealed: *Surely We have revealed the Book to you with the truth that you may judge between*

people by means of that which Allah has shown you; and be not an advocate on behalf of the treacherous. And ask forgiveness of Allah—about what you have told that Jew—*Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*. Then God turned to his neighbors and said: *Behold! You are they who plead for them in this world's life; but who will plead for them with Allah on the Resurrection Day or who shall be their protector?* Then God gave them a chance of repentance and said: A*nd whoever does evil or acts unjustly to his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allah, he shall find Allah Forgiving, Merciful. And whoever commits a sin, he only commits it against his own soul; and Allah is Knowing, Wise*—Why have you involved yourselves, O people! In this man's error pleading on his behalf? *And whoever commits a fault or a sin, then accuses of it one innocent*—even if he is a polytheist: *he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin… And whoever acts hostilely to the Messenger after that guidance has become manifest to him and follows other than the way of the believers, We will turn him to that to which he has (himself) turned and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort*. But he refused to avail himself of the repentance which God had offered to him. He went to the polytheists at Mecca. There, he dug hole in a house with intention of theft and the house fell down upon him and he was killed." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This meaning too is narrated through many chains of narrators with minor differences among them.

(8) The Messenger of God has said, "There is no servant who committed a sin then stood up and performed *wudū*ʾ and asked forgiveness of God from his sin but it shall be incumbent on God to forgive him, because He says: *And whoever does evil or acts unjustly to his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allah, he shall find Allah Forgiving, Merciful.*"

(9) Also he has said, "Verily God puts the servant in suffering (though He loves him) in order to hear his entreaties." Also he has said, "God was not to open the door of prayer and shut the door of its acceptance, because He says: *Call Me, I will answer to you.* And He was not to open the door of repentance and shut the door of forgiveness, while He says: *And whoever does evil or acts unjustly to his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allah, he shall find Allah Forgiving, Merciful.*" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(10) ᶜAbdullāh b. Hamād al-Ansārī narrates from ᶜAbdullāh b. Sinān, that he said: Abū ᶜAbdillāh said, "Backbiting is that you say about your brother what is (actually) found in him but God has kept it hidden. But if you say what is not in him, then it comes under the words of God:… *he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin.*" (*ibid.*)

(11) al-Qummī writes under the verse: *There is no good in most of their secret counsels*" My father has narrated to me from Ibn Abī ᶜUmayr from Hammād from al-Halabī from Abū ᶜAbdillāh that he said, 'Verily, God has made *al-Tamahhul* obligatory in the Qur'an.' I asked, 'And what is *al-Tamahhul*, may I be made your ransom!?' He said, 'That you should maintain a brighter face than that of your brother (in faith), and have an intent look on him (that is, you should not turn away your face from him when he consults you); and this is the word of God: *There is no good in most of their secret counsels.*'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

(12) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chains from ᶜAbdullāh b. Sinān from Abu al-Jārūd that he said, "Abū Jaᶜfar said, 'When I narrate any *hadīth* to you, you should ask me (its proof) from the Book of God. Then he said in some of his talks, 'Verily the Messenger of God has prohibited much talking, squandering the property and too much questioning.' He was asked, 'O son of the Messenger of God, the Mighty, the Great, says: *There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness and reconciliation between people;* and He says: *And do not give away your property which Allah has made for you a (means of) support to the weak of understanding* (4:5); and He says: *O you who believe! do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you,* (5:101). (*al-Kāfī*)

(13) Abraham b. ᶜAbdi al-Hamīd narrates through some reliable persons from Abū ᶜAbdillāh about the verse: *There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people*, that goodness means giving loan. (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ᶜAyyāshī)

Author's comment: al-Qummī also has narrated it in his *al-Tafsīr* through the same chain and this meaning has also been narrated through Sunnī chains of narrators. In any case, it is based on the flow of the verse and description of a relevant example.

(14) al-Suyūtī writes: Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāī, Ibn Mājah and al-Bayhaqī have narrated from Sufyān b. ʿAbdillāh al-Thaqafī that he said, "I said, 'O Messenger of God! Give me an order I should hold fast to it in Islam.' He said, 'Say: "I believe in God," then remain steadfast to it.' I said, 'O Messenger of God! What is the most dreadful thing you fear about me?' He said, 'This.' (and the Messenger of God caught the tip of his own tongue)." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: There are very numerous traditions condemning excessive talks and praising the silence in the books of the Shīʾīs and the Sunnīs.

(15) The same book says: Abū Nasr al-Sijizzī has narrated in *al-Ibānah* from Anas that he said, "A bedouin came to the Prophet; the Prophet said to him, 'O bedouin! Verily God has revealed to me in the Qur'an: *There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people, and whoever does this seeking Allah's pleasure, We will give him a mighty reward.* O bedouin! the mighty reward is the paradise.' The bedouin said, 'Praise be to God who guided us to Islam.'" (*ibid.*)

(16) The same book writes about the words of God: And whoever acts hostilely to the Messenger…: al-Tirmidhī and al-Bayhaqī (in his *al-Asmāʾ wa al-Sifāt*) have narrated from Ibn ʿUmar that he said, "The Messenger of God has said, 'God will never gather this *ummah* on error and God's hand is on the *jamāʾah*, and whoever separates (from it) he separates (for entering) into hell.'" (*ibid.*)

(17) Also al-Tirmidhī and al-Bayhaqī have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that the Prophet has said, "God will never gather my *ummah* (or, this *ummah*) on error and God's hand is on *jamāʾah.* (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: The tradition is well known and al-Hādī has narrated it from the Prophet in his letter to the people of Ahwāz as has been quoted in vol.3 of *Bihāru al-anwār*. The meaning of this tradition has been explained in the preceding commentary.

(18) Harīz has narrated from some of our companions from the fifth and sixth Imām that he said, "When the Commander of the Believers (ʿAlī) was in Kūfah, the people came to him and said, 'Appoint for us an imām who will lead us (in *tarāwīh*) in the month of Ramadān.' The Imām said, 'No' and forbade them to

pray it with the *jamāʾah*. When night came, they began saying, 'Weep in Ramadān, alas for Ramadān.' Then al-Hārith al-Aʾwar came to the Imām with some people and said, 'O Commander of the Believers, people are raising a hue and cry and they have not liked your talk.' At this juncture, the Imām said, 'Leave them to do what they like. Whoever wants should lead them in prayer.' Then he recited: *Whoever follows other than the way of the believers, We will turn him to which he has (himself) turned and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort.*" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(19) It is written in *al-Durr al-manthūr* about words of God, the Almighty: *and who is truer of word than Allah?*: al-Bayhaqī has narrated in *al-Dalāil* from ʿUqbah b. ʿĀmir (*inter alia* describing the journey of the Messenger of God to Tabūk):

"Then (the Messenger of God) arrived at Tabūk and praised God and glorified Him as is His due, and then he said, (after the praise of God): 'Verily the most truthful talk is the Book of God; the most reliable grip is the word of piety; the best of the religions is the religion of Abraham; the best custom is the custom of Muhammad; the noblest talk is the remembrance of God; the best story is this Qur'an; the best affair is the determined one and the worst affairs are the innovated ones; the most excellent guidance is that of the Prophets; the noblest death is martyrdom; the darkest blindness is going astray after guidance; the best knowledge is that which gives benefit; the best guidance is that which is acted upon; the most evil blindness is the blindness of the heart; upper hand is better than the lower hand,[1] that little which satisfies is better than the abundance which makes one forgetful; the worst apology is (the one offered) when death arrives; the worst remorse is the one (shown on) the Day of Resurrection. Some people don't come to prayer except near the end and some don't remember God but they talk nonsense; the biggest sin is the lying tongue; the best wealth is one's self reliance; the best provision is the piety; the pinnacle of the wisdom is the fear of God, the mighty, the Great; the best thing established in the hearts is certainty. To entertain doubt is a sort of disbelief; to lament for dead is an act of the *jāhiliyyah* (Ignorance); embezzlement is altogether in the

1 i.e., the hand that gives is better than the hand that receives. (*tr.*)

hell; hoarded treasure is (the instrument of) branding with the fire; poetry is among the musical instruments of Satan; wine is the vessel of sin; women are the snares of Satan; youth is a branch of lunacy; the most evil earning is interest; and the most wicked food is the property of the orphan. The blissful is he who learns lesson from (conditions of) the others; wretched is the one who becomes wretched in the womb of his mother; the resort of every one of you is a place of four arms (grave); the affairs (are decided) by their ends; the worst thinking is that of falsity. Everything which is to come is near; to abuse a believer is immorality; to fight him is disbelief; eating his flesh (backbiting him) is the disobedience to God; and the sanctity of his property is like that of his blood. He who (falsely) sears by God, He will refute him; he who forgives will be forgiven; he who pardons, God will pardon him; he who controls his anger, God will give him good reward; he who is patient in misfortune, God will recompense him. He who hankers for good reputation, God makes him disreputable. He who keeps patience, God multiplies (the reward) for him. He who disobeys God, He will give him punishment. O God! forgive me and my *ummah* (he said it three times); I seek pardon of God for me and for you.'"

(20) Muhammad b. Yūnus has narrated through some of his companions from Abū ʿAbdillāh; also Jābir has narrated from Abū Jaʾfar, about the words of God: *And most certainly I will bid them so that they shall alter Allah's creation*, that the Imāms said, "God's creation means the commandments of God." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(21) In the same book, Jābir narrates from Abū Jaʾfar about the same words of the Qur'an that he said, "It is God's religion".

Author's comment: Both traditions give the same meaning and it is as we have explained in the Commentary that God's creation means the natural religion.

(22) The words of God: *And bid them so that they shall slit the ears of the cattle*, have been explained in *Majmaʾ al-bayān* that they will cut the ears from its base; and it is written there that this meaning has been narrated from Abū ʿAbdillāh.

(23) Muhammad b. Muslim narrates from Abū Jaʾfar that he said, "When the verse was revealed: *whoever does evil, he shall be requited with it*, some companions of the Messenger of God said,

'How hard is this verse!' the Messenger of God said to them, 'Are not you afflicted in your properties, your offsprings and in yourselves?' They said, 'Certainly.' He said, '(This is) through which writes good deeds for you and erases the bad deeds.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: This meaning is narrated through many chains from the companions in the Sunnī books of traditions.

(24) al-Suyūtī writes: Ahmad, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and al-Tirmidhī have narrated from Abū Saʾīd al-Khudrī that he said, "The Messenger of God said, 'No believer is afflicted by hardship or sickness, grief or sorrow, trouble or sadness—even a thorn which pricks him—but God grants remission to his faults.'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: This theme has been narrated through numerous chains from the Prophet and the Imāms of Ahl al-bayt.

(25) al-Sadūq has narrated through his chains from al-Husayn b. Khālid that Abu al-Hasan al-Ridā said, "I heard my father narrating from his father that he said, 'Surely God took Abraham as a friend because he never returned anyone (empty handed) and never asked anyone (for his needs) other then God, the mighty, the Great.'" (*ʿUyūn al-akhbār*)

Author's comment: This is the most correct tradition about the meaning of Abraham as the friend of God because it fits perfectly with the literal meaning of the word; *al-khullah* means need; therefore your *khalīl* (friend) is the one who asks his needs only from you. And there are other narrations giving other reasons for his title.

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Verses 127-134

These verses are in conjunction with the ones in the beginning of the chapter which cover the subjects concerning women like marriage, prohibited degrees and inheritance, etc. Keeping it in view, it appears that these verses were revealed after those previous ones when the people asked the Messenger of God about the affairs affecting the women. The verses in the beginning of the chapter had resurrected the rights of women in property and social interactions, etc., which the people had previously killed.

God orders the Prophet to tell them in reply to their various queries that the laws establishing their rights on men are Divine decisions about which the Prophet has no say; not only that, but what is recited to them in the Book about the female orphans is also Divine order in which the Messenger of God has no say; not only that, but God orders them to deal with all the orphans with equity. Then come some rules concerning the discord and dispute between a woman and her husband which are generally found in every society.

وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ ۖ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي يَتَامَى النِّسَاءِ اللَّاتِي لَا تُؤْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ وَأَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلْيَتَامَىٰ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿١٢٧﴾

(4:127) ***And they ask you a decision about women, say: "Allah makes known to you His decision concerning them, and that which is recited to you in the Book concerning female orphans whom you do not give what is appointed for them while you desire to marry them, and concerning the weak among children, and that you should deal towards orphans with equity; and whatever good you do, Allah surely knows it"***

al-Rāghib has said: "*al-fatwā* and *al-Futyā* means reply to difficult rulings; and they say: 'I asked him a decision so he replied to me in this way.'"

It is understood from various usages of this word that it means a

man's reply concerning difficult affairs according to his opinion based on his *ijtihād*; or means the opinion itself concerning difficult matters, as is seen from this verse where *al-fatwā* has been attributed to God.

Although this verse may possibly be explained in various ways (based on different analyses of the full verse); yet, if we join this verse to those in the beginning of the chapter which are also concerned with women's problems, it will be seen that this verse was revealed after those first ones. It means that their enquiries were concerned in a general way with the laws regarding women which Islam had legislated with which the people were not familiar in the days of *jāhiliyyah*; those laws were exclusively concerned with women's rights regarding inheritance and marriage. Those questions were not about the orphan girls as this subject is not general; it is limited to a certain group and the rule about them has been laid down by the next sentence: *And that which is recited to you in the Book concerning female orphans whom you do not give what is appointed for them while you desire to marry them*. In short, the enquiry was about those things which cover the whole womenfolk, e.g., inheritance.

Consequently, the words: *say: Allah makes known to you His decision concerning them*, refers to verses in the beginning of the chapter and shows that decision is reserved for God and the Prophet doesn't have any authority in this respect. The meaning is: They ask you to give them your decision concerning the women. Say: The right to give decision belongs to God and He has given you His decision when He revealed the verses at the beginning of the chapter.

***…And that which is recited to you in the Book concerning female orphans whom you do not give what is appointed for them while you desire to marry them, and concerning the weak among children*:** As described above, the context shows that the rules for female orphans and the weak children has been added here because they have some link with the rules concerning women. Obviously, they were not included in their original enquiry which was limited to the women's affairs only. The sentence, "and that which is recited to you", is in conjunction with the pronoun, "them", preceding it; such conjunction has been allowed by al-Farrā', although other grammarians do not agree with him. Accordingly, the verse, "and that which is recited to you in the Book concerning female orphans" refers to those rules and ideas which were revealed at the beginning of the chapter. *al-Tilāwah* (recital) denotes recital of the words as well as description of the meaning of the words. The meaning is: "Say: God makes known

to you His decision about the laws which are recited to you in the Book concerning female orphans."

Some people take the word *aliftā*ʾ in the meaning of explanation. According to them the meaning will be: "Say: God explains to you that which is recited to you in the Book."

Many people have given various other constructions to these two sentences, but none of them is free from arbitrariness and inaccuracy which are not suitable for the Divine speech. For example, someone has said that the phrase, "that which is recited to you", is in conjunction with the name, 'God'; or with the implied pronoun in the phrase, 'makes known'. Some have said that it is in conjunction with, 'women', in the first sentence which says: *a decision about women*. Another one has said that the word, 'and', in 'and that which is recited', begins a new sentence, it has no connection with the preceding verse; according to them, "that which is recited to you", is the subject and, "in the Book", is its predicate. Still, others have said that *'wa'* in the verse *'wa mā yutlā ʿalaykum'* is for oath and the verse concerning female orphans explains the words concerning them in the preceding sentence. According to him, the meaning will be: Say: 'God makes known to you His decision—I swear with that which is recited to you in the Book—concerning female orphans… ' There is no need to point out the absurdities of these explanations.

Whom you do not give what is appointed for them while you desire to marry them: The speech describes the female orphans and points to their deprivations which were the main cause why God laid down the rules which were revealed earlier. Those just rules abrogated the prevalent customs and removed the hardships which the women were suffering. It was their custom that they used to take female orphans as their wards together with their properties; if she was beautiful, they married her and enjoyed both her beauty and her property. If, on the other hand, she turned out to be ugly or of plain features, they would not themselves marry her nor would they allow her to marry another man. In this way, they appropriated her property.

It shows that:

(1) The words of God, *what is appointed for them*, refer to the natural demands ingrained in the creation and that is the Divine Decree. The creation and the ingrained instincts pave for the human beings the path of their lives. It is that decree which has been appointed for him/her and tells him/her to marry when he/she reaches a certain age and which gives

him/her the freedom to manage his/her property the way he/she likes. To prevent him/her from marrying or from managing his/her own property is depriving him/her from what God has appointed for him/her at the beginning of the creation.

(2) "While you desire to marry them": It actually means, 'while you are averse to marry them'. Therefore, the preposition *'an* (off, away from) is omitted but understood here. This omission is understood from the preceding phrase, "whom you do not give what is appointed for them", and the following words, "and concerning the weak among children".

"The weak among children" is in conjunction with, "female orphans". They used to neglect orphaned children and deprive them from inheritance on the pretext that they were unable to ride and could not fight in defence of the women.

…and that you should deal towards orphans with equity: This is in conjunction with, *His decision concerning them*. The meaning is: Say: 'God makes known to you His decision that you should deal towards orphans with equity. This widens the circle of this rule from a limited group, that is, female orphans and weak children to all the orphans and in all their affairs, be it their property or other matters.

***…and whatever good you do, Allah surely knows it*:** It is a reminder to them that the rules which God has imposed on them about the women and the orphans are for their own good and God knows it. This encourages them to act on these rules because it is for their own good; and also warns them against disobeying the rules because surely God knows what they do.

وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا ۚ وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ ۗ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ۚ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٢٨﴾

(4:128) ***And if a woman fears ill-usage or desertion on the part of her husband, there is no blame on them, if they effect a reconciliation between them, and reconciliation is better, and avarice has been made to be present in the (people's) minds; and if you do good (to others) and guard (against evil), then surely Allah is aware of what you do.***

This subject was not included in their enquiry but it has a sort of

relevance with it, just like the order coming in the next verse: *And you have it not in your power to do justice.*

The order is given when the woman feels fear of mistreatment or desertion—and not the actual appearance of mistreatment or desertion—because attempts of reconciliation should be undertaken as soon as some symptoms and signs of ill-usage raise their head. The context shows that reconciliation here should take place when the wife forgoes some or all of her matrimonial rights in order to affect love, accord and genial relations for avoiding separation; and reconciliation is better.

***…and avarice has been made to be present in the (people's) minds*:** *al-Shuhh* (miserliness, avarice); it means that avarice has been ingrained in the human nature in order to guard his interests and avoid loss. Thus, every person looks after his own interest; a woman does not want to leave any of her matrimonial rights like dress, maintenance, accommodation and conjugal relationship; and the man does not show any affection and harmony when he wants to separate from the wife and does not like living with her. Therefore, there is no blame on them if they affect a reconciliation between them by forgoing some of their rights.

***…and if you do good (to others) and guard (against evil) then surely Allah is aware of what you do*:** It is an admonition to men that they should not deviate from the path of doing good and avoiding evil; they should always keep in mind that God knows whatever they are doing; they should not oppress the women in domestic life and should not make them so frustrated that they forego their due rights just to keep peace in the family.

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ۚ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾

(4:129) ***And you have it not in your power to do justice between wives, even though you may wish (it), but be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination; so that you leave her as it were in suspense; and if you effect a reconciliation and guard (against evil), then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful***

It gives further explanation of the order given in the beginning of the chapter where it was said: *But if you fear that you will not do justice*

(between them), then (marry) only one. The same ideal of justice is seen in the preceding verse where it says: *And if you do good (to others) and guard (against evil) then surely Allah is aware of what you do*. Obviously, this preceding verse contains a shade of threatening. Thus, man is bewildered as to how to affect real justice between the wives. Justice is the exact middle between the two extremes and to pinpoint it exactly is extremely difficult; especially so, because the relationship between the spouses is that of love and one does not have much control on the inclinations of the heart. Therefore, God explains here that justice between the wives in its true sense—to stand exactly in the middle of the extremes is beyond human power even if one may wish it. What a man is obliged to do is that he should not be totally inclined to one of them, leaving the other one as it were in suspense; that is, she does not feel as if she has a husband because she gets no attention from him, nor is she free of marriage so that she may marry someone else and go her own way. It is *wājib* (necessary) on the husband to do justice between his wives, that is, he should treat all of them in equal manner and should fulfil their rights without excessiveness. And it is *sunnah* for him to do good to all of them without showing any dislike to any of them and without subjecting any of them to ill-treatment; this was the behavior of the Messenger of God with his wives.

The proviso, "but be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination, so that you leave her as it were in suspense", proves that the preceding sentence: *And you have it not in your power to do justice between wives, even though you may wish (it),* doesn't mean that man cannot do justice between his wives at all, as some people have thought. And joining this misconception with the divine words: *but if you fear that you will not do justice (between) them, then (marry) only one*, they have claimed that Islam does not allow polygamy!

The proviso clearly shows that what has been negated is the real justice in which there is no excess at all and man stands in the exact middle; and what is allowed and made lawful is the practical justice in which minor inclinations are tolerated. Apart from that, the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet and the polygamy practised before the eyes of the Prophet, as well as the custom prevalent among the Muslims without any break since that time is enough to remove such erroneous impressions. Apart from that, to think that the divine words: *then marry such (other) women as seen good to you, two and three and four*, are merely imaginary suppositions which have no practical application, will bring down the Divine words to the

level of a riddle.

It should be noted that the words: *And if you affect a reconciliation and guard (against evil), then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*, encourage the men with emphasis that whenever any signs of discord and dispute appear, they should try to bring reconciliation; then it goes on to say that it is a part of piety and with piety comes divine forgiveness and mercy. In the preceding verse, it was stated that reconciliation is better and they were exhorted to do good and guard against evil; then comes this verse which puts emphasis over emphasis.

وَإِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللَّهُ كُلًّا مِنْ سَعَتِهِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٣٠﴾

(4:130) ***And if they separate, Allah will render them both free from want out of His Ampleness, and Allah is Ample-giving, Wise***

If the man and the woman separate by divorce, God will make them both free from want out of His Ampleness. Making them free from want in this context means that God will give them this freedom in all matters connected with matrimony, like harmony, intimacy and the wife's maintenance and clothing, etc. God has not reserved either party for the other one; so, it is not that if they separate from each other, they will not get another spouse in their long life; rather it is a natural custom which is wide-spread among all the human beings and everyone by nature is inclined to marry.

The words: "and God is Ample-giving, Wise. And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is God's", give the reason of the statement "God will render them both free from want out of His Ampleness".

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيدًا ﴿١٣١﴾

(4:131) ***And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's, and certainly We enjoined those who were given the Book before you and (We enjoin) you too that you should be careful (of your duty to) Allah; and if you disbelieve, then surely whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's and Allah is Self-sufficient, Praise-worthy***

The verse puts emphasis on the call addressed to them that they should pay special consideration to piety in all the stages and in every situation of their matrimonial life. It also shows that going against piety is being ungrateful to Divine favors; the piety which is acquired by God's obedience proves one's gratefulness to Divine favors. Alternatively, we may say that it is only because of disbelief that one discards God's fear: it may be open disbelief (as in the case of unbelievers and polytheists) or hidden disbelief (as in the case those believers who indulge in God's disobedience).

The above explanation makes clear the words of God, *and if you disbelieve, then surely whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's, and Allah is Self-sufficient, Praise-worthy.* The meaning is: If you do not remember what We have enjoined you and those who were before you and if you neglect this order and do not acquire piety—and it is disbelief in God or emanates from disbelief in God—it will not harm God at all. God is not in need of you or of your piety, and surely whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is God's, and God is Self-sufficient, Praise-worthy.

Question: Why have the words: *Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's*, repeated three times in three consecutive verses?

Reply: In the first instance, it explains the reasons of preceding sentence: *and Allah is Ample-giving, Wise.* The second instance is a response to the conditional clause: *and if you disbelieve.* It means, if you disbelieve, then God is not in need of you; it is made more clear by the ending phrase: *and Allah is Self-sufficient, Praise-worthy*. The third sentence starts a new topic and gives a sort of reason to the Divine words: *If He pleases, He can make you pass away.*

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾

(4:132) *And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's, and Allah is sufficient as a protector*:

We have repeatedly explained the meaning of the ownership of God. He is the Protector who manages His servants' affairs and enough is He as a protector. He does not need any help in His work. If He was not pleased with the deeds of a people and was angry with their behavior, He could easily make them pass away and bring other people in their place, or He could pull them behind and let others go ahead of them. This meaning,

which is pointed out by the context, establishes a connection between this verse and the next one: *If He pleases, He can make you pass away O people!*

إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ بِآخَرِينَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ قَدِيرًا ﴿١٣٣﴾

(4:133) *If He pleases, He can make you pass away, O people! And bring others; and Allah has the power to do this*

The preceding verse gives a clarion call for adherence to piety which God has enjoined this *ummah* and those who were before them from the People of the Book. In this context, it is clear that the declaration that God does not need anything is closely related to the order of piety. The meaning, therefore, will be like this: God has enjoined you all to adhere to piety, so be careful or your duty towards God. If you disbelieve, then God is Self-sufficient and He is the Owner of everything. He can manage it in any way He pleases, and for any purpose He pleases. If He pleases that He should be worshipped and people should adhere to piety but you did not follow His commands in a proper way, then God has the power to keep you behind and let others to precede you. Those people will do what God is pleased with; and clearly God has power to do so. Accordingly, the verse describes the possibility of exchanging unpious people with the pious ones. al-Baydāwī has narrated a tradition in his *tafsīr* that when this verse was revealed, the Messenger of God patted his hand on the back of Salmān and said, " Surely they are his people." This tradition supports the meaning given by us; and you should ponder on it.

Some exegetes have said that probably it means: If God pleases, He will destroy you all and bring other people in your place or other creation in place of human beings. But this meaning is not supported by the context. Of course, this explanation could be given for the verse: *Do you not see that Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth? If He pleases He will take you off and bring a new creation. And this is not difficult for Allah* (14:19-20).

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٣٤﴾

(4:134) *Whoever desires the reward of this world, then with Allah*

is the reward of this world and the hereafter; and Allah is Hearing, Seeing

It is another statement which exposes the error of him who discards piety and neglects Divine enjoyment, thinking that he only needs this world's reward and booty. In fact, such a person has fallen into confusion, because the reward of this world and of the hereafter, both are with God, and in His hand. So, why should a man concentrate on the lower item of the two? Why should he not strive for the higher reward or both of them together? This meaning has been given by others; but more apparently, the meaning is this, and God knows better: Surely the reward of this world and the hereafter and the felicity of both together is with God. Therefore, man should strive to be nearer to Him, even he who wants only the reward and felicity of this world, because man cannot achieve felicity without fear of God and piety which can be obtained only through the Divine religion which He has ordained. Religion is the exclusive path to the real felicity and happiness. How can one get any reward unless God gives and issues it to him, and God is Hearing, Seeing.

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Examining Narrations

(1) al-Suyūtī says: Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Saʾīd b. Jubayr that he said: "Inheritance was not given except to a matured man who could manage and look after the property; children and women were not given any share in inheritance. When the verses of inheritance were revealed in the chapter of 'The Women', it proved very difficult to the people. They said, 'What! will a child inherit one who cannot manage the property? And the women who are exactly in the same position? Will they inherit as a man inherits?' They hoped that something will come down from the heavens to rectify the situation. They kept waiting. When they saw that nothing was happening, they said, 'If it was established then it would become an unavoidable obligation.' So, they decided to enquire further. They asked the Prophet; then God sent down the verse: *And they ask you a decision about women, say, 'Allah makes known to you His decision concerning them, and that which is recited to you in the Book concerning female orphans who you do not give what is appointed for them while you desire to marry them*'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(2) ʿAbd b. Hamīd and Ibn Jarīr have narrated from Abraham that he said about this verse: "If an orphaned girl was ugly, they did not give her anything from the inheritance and prevented her from marrying until when she died, they would take her inheritance. Therefore, God revealed this verse." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: These connotations have been narrated from numerous Shīʾī and Sunnī chains, some of which was given at the beginning of the chapter.

(3) The words: *whom you do not give what is appointed for them*, mean what has been appointed for them in inheritance. al-Tabrisī has said that this meaning is narrated from Abū Jaʾfar. (*Majmaʾ al-bayān*)

(4) al-Qummī has said that the verse: *If a woman fears ill-usage or desertion on the part of her husband…,* was revealed about the daughter of Muhammad b. Maslamah. She was the wife of Rāfiʾ b. Khadīj, and her age had advanced. He married another young woman and she looked more attractive to him than the daughter of Muhammad b. Maslamah. So, she said to him: "Don't I find you turning away from me and preferring her?" Rāfiʾ said: "She is a young woman and is more attractive. If you wish, you may agree on this arrangement that she is given two or three days with me, and you have one day." The daughter of Muhammad b. Maslamah refused. So, he gave her one divorce. Then he gave her another divorce. Still, she said, "By God, I will never agree unless you treat both of us in equal manner." (God says: *and avarice has been made to be present in the minds.*) And the daughter of Muhammad b. Maslamah was not ready to forgo her share and persisted in her demand. Then Rāfiʾ told her that either she should agree or he would give her the third divorce. She did not like separation from her husband and agreed. She effected the reconciliation as described. So, God said: *there is no blame on them if they effect a reconciliation between them, and reconciliation is better*. When she agreed and settled down, he could not do justice between them. Then the verse was revealed: *and you have it not in your power to do justice between wives, even though you many wish (it), but be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination; so that you leave her as it were in suspense*. It is not proper that you should attend to one wife and leave the other in suspense as though she

is neither a widow nor married. When the woman agrees and accepts the terms which the husband had offered for reconciliation, then there is no blame on the husband or the wife to live according to the agreed terms. If she does not agree to forgo any of her rights, then he should either treat them equally or divorce her. There is no third alternative. (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

Author's comment: al-Suyūtī has narrated it in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Mālik, ʿAbdu al-Razzāq, ʿAbd b. Hamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and al-Hākim(who has confirmed this tradition as correct).

(5) al-Suyūtī has said: "al-Tayālisī, Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn Rāhawayh, ʿAbd b. Hamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and al-Bayhaqī have narrated from ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib that he was asked about this verse, and he said: "It is about a man who has two wives; one has become old or is ugly; so he wants to separate from her; she offers a compromise that he should remain with her for one night and with the other one several nights and should not divorce her. As long as it is done on her own free will, there is no difficulty in it. If she returns, he will treat both of them equally." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(6) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of narrators from al-Halabī, from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: "I asked the Imām about the words of God: *And if a woman fears ill-usage or desertion on the part of her husband*. The Imām said, 'It is about a woman who is married to a man and he dislikes her and says to her, "I want to divorce you." She says to him, "Don't do it, I hate that you should make me an object of ridicule in the society. Instead, take away my night and do with it whatever you want. If there is any other thing, that will also be given to you and let me be." This is the meaning of the words of God: *there is no blame on them if they effect a reconciliation between them,* and this is the reconciliation.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: There are other traditions of the same meaning narrated in *al-Kāfī* and *al-Tafsīr* of al-ʿAyyāshī.

(7) al-Qummī narrates about the Divine words: *and avarice has been made to be present in the (people's) minds*, that he said, "Avarice is ingrained in nature; some things she chooses to keep, some things she forgoes." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

(8) Hishām b. Sālim narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh about the words of God: *And you have it not in your power to do justice between*

wives, even though you may wish (it), that he said, "It refers to love." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(9) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of narrators from Noah b. Shuʾbah and Muhammad b. al-Hasan that they said, "Ibn Abi al-ʿAwjāʾ asked Hishām b. al-Hakam and said, 'Is not God Wise?' He said, 'Certainly; He is the Most Wise.' He said, 'Then tell me about the Divine words: *then marry such (other) women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one.* Is it not a decisive order?' He said, 'Certainly.' Then he said, 'Now, tell me about the Divine words: *And you have it not in your power to do justice between wives, even though you may wish (it), but be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination; so that you leave her as it were in suspense.* Does a wise one talk like this?' Hishām could not reply. So, he went to Medina to Abū ʿAbdillāh. The Imām said, '(You have come) when it is neither the time of *hajj* nor of *ʿumrah!*' Hishām said, 'Yes, may I be made your ransom! I have come for a problem which has kept me worried. Ibn Abi al-ʿAwjāʾ asked me a question and I could not reply him.' The Imām said, 'What is that ?' Hishām narrated the full story.

"Abū ʿAbdillāh said to him, 'As for the verse: *then marry such (other) women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them) then (marry) only one,* it speaks about the maintenance; and as for the verse: *And you have not in your power to do justice between wives, even though you may wish (it), but be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination; so that you leave her as it were in suspense,* it speaks about love.'

"When Hishām went to Ibn Abi al-ʿAwjāʾ and told him the reply, he said, 'By God, it is not from you.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: A similar *hadīth* has been narrated from al-Qummī which says: An atheist asked Abū Jaʾfar al-Ahwal exactly the same question. He went to Medina and asked Abū ʿAbdillāh for the reply and the Imām replied him exactly in the same way. Abū Jaʾfar returned to the man and gave him the reply, on hearing which he said, "This you have brought from Hijāz."

(10) al-Tabrisī explains the Qurʾanic words: *so that you leave her as it were in suspense,* in this way: You leave the one you are disinclined

towards her as if she is neither married to a husband nor is free from marriage. He has said that this meaning is narrated from Abū Jaʾfar and Abū ʿAbdillāh. (*Majmaʾ al-bayān*)

(11) The same book states about the Prophet that he used to distribute (provisions, time, etc.) among his wives, and then used to pray: "O God! This is my distribution of the things which I possess; do not blame me for the thing which you do possess and I do not." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This tradition has been narrated in Sunnī books through several chains. The phrase, "which you do possess and I do not", refers to the love. Yet there is something wrong in this tradition. God is far above blaming someone for some thing not in his possession, not in his control. He Himself has said: *Allah does not lay on any soul a burden except to the extent to which He has granted it* (65:7); and the Prophet was fully cognizant of His Lord's dignity to ask Him to bring into existence a thing already existing.

(12) al-Kulaynī has narrated through his chain of narrators from Ibn Abī Laylā that he said: "Narrated to me ʿĀsim b. Hamīd and said, 'I was with Abū ʿAbdillāh when a man came to him and complained of his poverty. The Imām ordered him to get married. 'Āsim said that (after that) the man's poverty became more serious; so he came to Abū ʿAbdillāh. The Imām enquired about his condition; and he said that the poverty had increased. The Imām said, 'Now, separate (from her).' So, he divorced her. ʿĀsim reports that he again came to the Imām who asked him how did he do. He said, 'I have become rich and my condition is very good.' Then Abū ʿAbdillāh said, 'I told you to do two things which God had ordered. God has said: *And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves; if they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of his grace; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing* (24:32). And He has also said: *And if they separate, Allah will render them both free from want out of His Ampleness* (4:130).

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Verse 135

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ
أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۖ فَلَا
تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا ۚ وَإِنْ تَلْوُوا أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
خَبِيرًا ﴿١٣٥﴾

(4:135) ***O you who believe! be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah's sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do.***

al-Qist means 'justice'. To stand with justice means to enforce it, to maintain it. Maintainers of justice are those who fully and perfectly establish justice without deviating from, or inclining against, it because of some low desire or sentiment, fear, or greed, or other such factors.

This virtue is the most perfect cause and nearest factor for following the truth and protecting it from getting lost. One of its corollaries is adherence to truth in giving evidence.

This verse has been revealed to describe the rule of evidence, but it has started with talk of justice, and then it proceeds to the rule of evidence. In other words, first a general ideal has been described and then it focuses on one of its aspects. It is as though it says: 'You should be bearers of witness for God's sake but it will be difficult for you unless you become maintainers of justice.' So, you should be maintainers of justice in order to become bearers of witness for God's sake.

The words, "bearers of witness for God's sake", show the purpose of the action; bear witness so that your witness should be for God, as God has said: *And give testimony for Allah* (63:2). An evidence will be for the sake of God when it is given in truth for the sake of demonstrating the truth and reviving it, as is clear from the sentence: *therefore do not follow*

(your) low desires, lest you deviate.

…though it may be against your ownselves or (your) parents or near relatives…: Even if the evidence goes against your own interest or against the interest of your parents or near relatives, it should not prompt you to alter the evidence or hide it. Giving evidence against oneself or against one's parents or relatives means that the evidence, when given, will harm the testifier or his parents or relatives. It makes no difference whether the party which would suffer damage is the one against whom the evidence is given directly; for example, if there is a case between his father and someone else and he testifies against his own father; or the damage may reach them indirectly.

…If he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion…: The dual pronoun of "them both" refers to "rich or poor" because the same person can be rich at one time and poor at another; thus the conjunction, 'or' brings the two alternatives together just for describing the situation. There is no plurality in actual fact. This is what has been described by some exegetes. The meaning: God is nearer to the rich in his wealth and to the poor in his poverty. What the verse emphasizes is that the wealth of the rich should not cause you to deviate from the truth and incline to him; nor should the poverty of the poor incite you to try to better his condition by twisting the truth in his favor. You should bear witness for the sake of God and then leave Him to look at the rich and the poor. He is nearer to them and more Merciful to their condition. It is a reflection of His Mercy that He has obliged you to follow the truth compulsorily and has enjoined you to maintain the justice; when the justice is maintained and the truth becomes manifest, then the humanity will enjoy felicity and it will strengthen the rich and improve the condition of the poor.

A rich or poor may benefit in one or two cases from an evidence which is twisted or hidden, but in the long run it makes the truth feeble and the justice dead. It gives life to oppression and strengthen to falsehood and injustice; and this is the incurable disease which destroys the humanity.

…therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate…: There is a danger that you will deviate from truth and justice by following your low desire and by not giving the evidence for the sake of God. The words, "lest you deviate", describe the reason of this order. It may also be translated as, do not follow your low desires to deviate from truth.

…and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do: Swerving with evidence means twisting it, and turning aside means

not giving evidence and hiding it.

Some people have recited this sentence "*wa in talū*"; in that case, the meaning will be, if you are given responsibility of giving evidence and you fulfil it or turn aside; in both cases, surely God is aware of what you do and He will give you its recompense.

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Examining Narrations

(1) Abū ʿAbdillāh has said, "A believer has seven rights on another believer. The most obligatory of them is that the man should tell truth, even if it goes against his own self or against his parents, he should not deviate from truth for their sake." Then the Imām recited: *therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate, and if you swerve or turn aside,* from the truth. (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

Author's comment: This tradition generalizes the meaning of evidence to include general truthfulness. al-Tabrisī says: It is said that the last phrase means: If you change the evidence or hide it; and he has said that it is narrated from Abū Jaʾfar.

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Verses 136-147

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٣٦﴾

(4:136) ***O you who believe! believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book which He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book which He revealed before; and whoever disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers and the last day, he indeed strays off into a remote error***

The believers have been ordered to believe again. The second belief is related to the objects detailed, that is, believing in God and His Messenger and the Book; and they have been threatened if they did not believe in each of these realities. In short, the believers are told to spread their belief to include the details of these realities as they are the matters of belief which are interrelated and one leads to another. God, there is none to be worshiped except Him. His are the beautiful names and lofty adjectives. His Knowledge and Power was the reason that He created the creatures and guided them to their true destination and felicity; and then He will revive them for the day of recompense. This could not be effected without sending the messengers, to bring good news and warn, and sending down the Books which would decide among them in what they had differed, and to explain to the people the realities of genesis and resurrection, as well as the fundamentals of sharī'ah and laws.

Belief in any of these realities cannot be complete unless one believes in all of them without exception. To reject some of them and adhere to some others is disbelief or hypocrisy—depending on whether the partial rejection was shown to others or kept secret. It is an aspect of hypocrisy that the believer takes a path which would lead him to reject some of these realities, e.g., if he separates from the society of the believers and goes nearer to unbelievers' society and befriends them, and confirms them in some of their accusations which they direct against the belief and the

believers; or the objections or mockery which they lay down against the truth. That is why God has described in the next verses the hypocrites' condition and threatened them with painful chastisement.

The meaning which has been given above is clear from the verse. It is more appropriate than what some other exegetes have written that the words of God, "O you who believe! believe", means: O you who believe apparently by acknowledging the truth of God and His Messenger, believe in your heart also in order that your appearance conforms with your inner self. The same is the case of another one's exegesis that the order to believe again means remain steadfast in your belief. Likewise, our exegesis is more relevant than what some others have said that the verses were addressed to the believers among the People of the Book, that is, O you who believe from among the People of the Book! Believe in God and His Messenger, Muhammad, and the Book which He has revealed on His Messenger, that is, Qur'an. These themes may be correct in themselves but the context of the speech rejects them and the last explanation is the worst.

***…and whoever disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and the last day, he indeed strays off into a remote error*:** The preceding part of the verse (*O you who believe! believe…*) was a call to the believers to combine all the mentioned realities in belief, showing that the parts of this total are interrelated and none of them can be separated from the others. Now, those parts of the belief are mentioned again, but here, the conjunctive, 'and', is used in the meaning of 'or'. The meaning: Whoever disbelieves in God or His angels or His Book or His Messengers or the last day—whoever disbelieves in any of these essential parts of belief, he indeed strays off into a remote error.

The conjunctive, 'and', doesn't mean that all these ingredients taken together will form one object of faith. In other words, it does not mean that when one disbelieves in all these realities taken together then he will stray off into a remote error. Moreover, the Qur'anic verses in several places declare that whoever disbelieves in any one of these, will be a disbeliever.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٣٧﴾

(4:137) ***Surely (as for) those who believe then disbelieve, again believe and again disbelieve, then increase in disbelief, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them in the (right) path.***

If we look at this verse alone, separate from the preceding and the following verses, it will show how God will give recompense to the apostates who repeatedly renounce the faith. They believe then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve and then increase in their disbelief. God threatens if their condition remains like that, He will never forgive them nor guide them in the right path. He should not hope to receive Divine Mercy at all because he is not firm in true belief and treats the Divine commandment like a plaything. Whoever is in such a condition, his profession of belief is merely a show which will never be accepted. If they had seriously believed, then they would have been covered with Divine forgiveness and guidance. When one truly repents by believing in God, God never rejects His repentance and faith as He has promised His servants. We have explained this subject under the verse: *Repentance with Allah is only for those who do evil in ignorance…* (4:17), in volume four[1] of this book. The verse declares that normally and naturally such people are totally deprived of the Divine Mercy. But there can be exceptions if someone truly believes and remains steadfast in the true faith—in rare cases. God says: *How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieve after their believing, and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true, and clear arguments had come to them? And Allah does not guide the unjust people Except those who repent after that and amend, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Surely those who disbelieve after believing, then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted, and these are they that have gone astray* (3:86-90).

As you see, the verses have made exception of those who disbelieve after believing and says that God will not forgive them nor guide them to the right path. Then He again declares non-acceptance of the repentance of those who increase in their disbelief. Such people disbelieve after believing and after bearing witness that the Messenger was true, and clear arguments had come to them and yet they became apostates. This apostasy is based on obstinacy and stubbornness, and increase in this disbelief proves that this obstinacy and insolence has taken deep roots in their hearts; and oppression and arrogance has taken their souls in their clutch. Now, returning to God and repentance is normally not expected from such a person.

This meaning is understood if we take the verse alone, separately. But

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng. transl.), vol.8, pp.64-74. (*tr.*)

all these verses together are apparently revealed in a single context and are interrelated.

Accordingly, the words, *Surely as those who believe then disbelieve…*, give the reason for the preceding sentence: *whoever disbelieve in Allah and His angels and His books and His Messengers and the last day, he indeed strays off into a remote error.* Thus, both verses will have one application, that is, he who disbelieves in God and the angels, the Divine Books, the messengers and the last day is the one who believes then disbelieves, then again believes, again disbelieves, and then increases in disbelief. Also he will be among the hypocrites about whom God declares in the next verse onwards: *Announce to the hypocrites that they shall have a painful chastisement.*

Keeping it in view, the explanations of the Divine words: *Surely (as for) those who believe then disbelieve…*, will change according to the explanations given for the first verse: *O you who believe! believe in Allah and His Messenger…*, as we have mentioned earlier.

If the first verse is taken to mean that you should believe in God and His Messenger in your heart as you have believed in them in appearance, then the belief, then disbelief, then again belief, then disbelief will show the situation of the hypocrites, as their condition and behavior keeps changing continuously; when they meet the believers they say one thing and on meeting disbelievers, they speak its opposite.

If the first verse means that you should be steadfast on the belief which you have acquired, then the belief, then disbelief and so on will mean apostasy after apostasy.

If it is said that the verse calls the People of the Book to believe in God and His Messenger, then the belief, then *kufr*, and so on will refer to their believing in Moses, then disbelieving in him by worshipping the calf, then believing in ʿUzayr (Ezra) or in Jesus, then disbelieving in him, then increasing in disbelief by rejecting Muhammad and what he had brought from God.

And if the first verse means to spread your overall belief to cover the detailed realities, as we have said, then the words, *Surely (as for) those who believe, then disbelieve…*, will show its reason which will perfectly fit the condition of the hypocrites who are discussed soon after that; one of whose characteristics is described in these words: *Those who take the unbelievers for guardians rather than believers.* Obviously, he who remains in close contact with unbelievers separated from the believers' society,

cannot avoid visiting their gatherings and being intimate to them, joining their conversations and confirming some of their talks which God is not pleased with; because they ascribe to the true religion and the leaders of the religion calumnies and vilifications, making a mockery of them. Therefore, such a man who meets the believers and joins in any of their religious functions shows himself as a believer; however, when he meets unbelievers and confirms some of their false assertions, he becomes an unbeliever. At one time he is a believer, and at another, he is an unbeliever. As he continues in this manner, his disbelief increases this characteristic takes firm roots. And God knows better.

His ever changing condition and instability of mind destroy his chance of repentance; because even if at times he feels remorse on his misdeeds, he doesn't remain firm in that remorse too. Of course, if he repents and remains steadfast in his repentance in a way that the changing situations cannot shake it and desires cannot bend it, then his repentance will be acceptable. And it is for this reason that God has put some tough conditions for acceptance of repentance from such a hypocrite in order that there remains no room for any change or deviation: *Except those who repent and amend and hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their religion to Allah…*

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بَشِّرِ الْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٣٨﴾

(4:138) ***Announce to the hypocrites that they shall have a painful chastisement. Those who take the unbelievers for guardians rather than believers.***

It is a threat to the hypocrites; God describes them as having the unbelievers as guardians rather than believers. This condition is a bit general and is not restricted to the hypocrites who in their hearts had never believed and were only making a show of belief; because a group of true believers also were afflicted with this malady. They enjoyed friendship of unbelievers, or were cut off from the believers' society. Even in the days of the Prophet some believers had secret contacts with unbelievers and were on intimate terms with them.

It supports to a certain extent the view that the hypocrites mentioned in this verse were actually a group of the believers who had taken unbelievers as their friends and guardians in preference to the believers. It is further supported by the apparent meaning of the next verse: *And indeed*

He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's communications disbelieved in and mocked at, do not sit with them until they enter into some other discourse; surely then you would be like them. This verse, in fact, is a threat to the hypocrites but is addressed to the believers. Moreover, this view is strengthened by the description of their condition in their hypocrisy where God says:

…and do not remember Allah save a little: This sentence confirms that they used to remember God although very little. This could not be said about the hypocrites who had not believed in their hearts at all.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ أَيَبْتَغُونَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٣٩﴾

(4:139) ***Do they seek honor from them? Then surely all honor is for Allah.***

It is an interrogative in the sense of negative, and the reply, "then surely all honor is for God", confirms the negative sense. The honor emanates from kingdom and kingdom belongs to God only: Say*: "O Allah! Master of the Kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest, and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest"* (3:26).

وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۚ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا مِثْلُهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْكَافِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٤٠﴾

(4:140) ***And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's communications disbelieved in and mocked at, do not sit with them until they enter into some other discourse; surely then you would be like them; surely Allah will gather together the hypocrites and the unbelievers all in Hell.***

It points to what was revealed in the chapter of "The Cattle": *And when you see those who enter into false discourses about Our communications withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse, and if the Satan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people* (6:68). The chapter of "The Cattle" was revealed in Mecca while

"The Women" was revealed in Medina. The verse 6:68 uses second person singular pronouns. It proves that some Qur'anic speeches were addressed directly to the Prophet but they were meant for the whole *ummah*. The sentence, "Surely you would be like them", gives the reason of this prohibition: We have forbidden you because if you would sit with them in this situation you would become like them and "Surely God will gather together the unbelievers and the hypocrites all in hell".

الَّذِينَ يَتَرَبَّصُونَ بِكُمْ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعْكُمْ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤١﴾

(4:141) ***Those who wait for (some misfortune to befall) you; then if you have a victory from Allah they say: "Were we not with you?" And if there is a chance for the unbelievers, they say: "Did we not acquire the mastery over you and defend you from the believers?" So Allah shall judge between you on the Day of Resurrection; and Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers***

al-Tarabbus (waiting); *al-istihwādh* (mastery, over-coming). This describes another characteristic of these hypocrites: they have preserved the contact with both parties, the believers and the unbelievers. They seek to profit from both groups and try to take advantage from whoever is in a better position. If the believers are victorious, they say: "Were we not with you?" Therefore, we are entitled to have a share in whatever you have gathered as booty, etc. If the unbelievers get some chance, they say: "Did we not acquire the mastery over you and defend you from the believers?" that is, we stopped you from believing in what the Muslims do believe. Therefore, we are entitled to a part of whatever you have got; we have done a favor to you as we provided you with this chance.

It is said: The believers' triumph has been called victory because that is what God has promised them; and the unbelievers' success is described as a chance to show its insignificance; because whatever the interim success, in the end, God has promised the believers that they will be victorious and that God is their guardian. Probably it is for this reason that the victory

has been ascribed to God but not the chance.

***…So Allah shall judge between you on the Day of Resurrection; and Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers*:** The verse is addressed to the believers although the judgement will cover the hypocrites and the unbelievers as well. The sentence, "and God will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers", means that the judgement on that day will be in favor of the believers and against the unbelievers; and this reality will never change. This deprives the unbelievers of any hope because on the last day the believers will be triumphant over the unbelievers.

Possibly the declaration, that the unbelievers will not be given a way against the believers, covers both worlds—this and the hereafter because the believers will always be victorious as long as they adhere to the demands of their faith. God says: *And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers* (3:139).

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا
كُسَالَىٰ يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾

(4:142) ***Surely the hypocrites strive to deceive Allah, while He is deceiving them, and when they stand up for prayer, they stand up sluggishly; they do it only to be seen of men and do not remember Allah save a little.***

al-Mukhādaʾah denotes continuous or intensified deception, because in Arabic, when some letters are added in a root word the meaning also increases. The words, "while He is deceiving them", describes the condition, that is, they are trying to deceive God while He is deceiving them. In short, these people, with their hypocritical deed—pretension of faith, remaining near the believers and attending their gatherings—want to deceive God, that is, the Prophet and the believers; and their intention is to seek benefits from them through their unreal belief and deeds. They do not understand that it is God Who is deceiving them by leaving them free to commit these deeds, without putting any hinderance against them; it is their requital because of their impure intentions and wicked deeds. So, when they try to deceive God it is actually God who is deceiving them exactly through the showy deeds and bad faith.

…and when they stand up for prayer, they stand up sluggishly: they

do it only to be seen of men and do not remember Allah save a little: It is another characteristic of the hypocrites. When they stand up to pray, they do so sluggishly and for showing the people. The prayer is the best act of worship through which God is remembered. If their hearts had been inclined to their Lord with true belief, they would not have felt sluggish and dispirited; they would have prayed with full attention and true remembrance of God; they would not have done it merely to be seen by people, rather they would have remembered God very often as happens when the heart is inclined to someone.

مُذَبْذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ لَا إِلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾

(4:143) ***Wavering between that (and this), (belonging) neither to these nor to those; and whomsoever Allah causes to err, you shall not find a way for him.***

al-Tabrisī has explained in *Majmaʾ al-bayān* that this word denotes setting in pendulous motion, as when a thing is suspended in air and is moved to and fro. A thing is called *mudhabdhab* when it moves between two extremes without having any attachment to either. This is exactly the characteristic of hypocrites. They move between belief and disbelief, they belong exclusively neither to the believers like the true Muslims nor to the disbelievers like open infidels.

The sentence, "and whomsoever God causes to err, you shall not find a way for him", gives the reason of the preceding description of pendulous motion. The reason why they move to and fro, without adhering to any side, is that God has made them go astray from the path and now they cannot find the true path.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا ﴿١٤٤﴾ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرْكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾

(4:144-145) ***O you who believe! do not take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers; do you desire that you should give to Allah a manifest proof against yourselves? Surely the***

hypocrites are in the lowest stage of the Fire, and you shall not find a helper for them.

al-Sultān (proof); [Regarding] *al-darak* and *al-dark*, al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-Dark* is synonymous with *al-darj* (staircase), but *al-darj* is used to describe ascending steps while ad- dark is used for descending. That is why we see that the ranks of the Garden are called *al-darajāt* (ranks) and the stages of the Fire; *al-darakāt* (stages); also because there is an idea of descending down in the hell, it is called *al-hāwiyah* (infernal depth) [which is derived from *hawā* (to fall down)]."

The verse, as you see, forbids the believers to establish friendship with unbelievers in preference to the believers' friendship; and the next verse gives its reason by a severe threat which is addressed to the hypocrites. The reason is that God counts such friendship as hypocrisy, and warns the believers from indulging in it.

The context shows that these two verses give the sum total of the preceding speech. This makes us almost certain that the previous verses had exposed the condition of those believers whose faith was weak and hearts diseased; and therefore the verses called them hypocrites. Or at least such believers are joined with the hypocrites in those verses. Then it admonishes the believers that they should not go near that line, otherwise they would make themselves liable to displeasure of God. They should not give God any proof against themselves; otherwise He will leave them, to go astray and put them in deception, leaving them oscillating in this life. Then He will join them with unbelievers in the hell and put them in the lowest stage of the Fire; there will be no connection between them and anyone who could help them or intercede for them.

These two verses clearly show two things:

(1) Leaving someone to go astray, deceiving him and any such display of Divine displeasure emanates from clear proof which the people's deeds provide against them. These humiliations and degradations are decreed as recompense of their actions. The Divine Majesty is too high to initiate any evil or misfortune for them without there being a reason for it from their side. Therefore, the sentence, "do you desire that you should give to God a manifest proof against yourselves?", Has the same connotation as the words: *He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors* (2:26).

(2) In the hell, people are divided in various stages which differ in lowliness and ignominy. Naturally, their chastisement goes increasing according to the lowliness of their grade which God has named descending stages. [The lower the stage, the harsher the torture.]

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ
مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٤٦﴾

(4:146) ***Except those who repent and amend and hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their religion to Allah; these are with the believers, and Allah will grant the believers a mighty reward.***

This is an exception from the threat given to the hypocrites in the preceding verse: *Surely the hypocrites are in the lowest stage of the Fire.* It follows that these people have separated from the hypocrites and joined the believers. That is why the exception is followed by these words, "these are with the believers"; and then the reward of all the believers has been mentioned together, "and God will grant the believers a mighty reward."

This group, excepted from the hypocrites, has been described with several difficult characteristics without which the hypocrisy cannot be uprooted. It begins with repentance, that is, returning to God; this returning and repentance will be of no value unless they rectify all that has gone bad in their thoughts and deeds. Even this rectification will not avail them anything until they adhere to God; in other words, until they follow the Divine Book and the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet; because there is no path leading to God except that which He has laid down Himself, all other paths are those of Satan. This adherence too will not benefit them unless they are sincere in their religion to God, because polytheism is such a sin which can never be forgiven. When they have repented and amended every defect in their character, have held fast to God and are sincere in their religion to God, then they will be true believers without any taint of polytheism. Then they will be protected from hypocrisy and will be guided aright. God says: *Those who believe and mix not their faith with inequity, those are they for whom is security and they are (the ones) guided aright* (6:82).

The context shows that the word, 'believers', refers to pure believers who are sincere in their faith. They have been introduced by the attributes, "those who repent and amend and hold fast to God and are sincere in

their religion to God". These virtues cover all the details which God has counted in His Book as the believers' characteristics and attributes. For example, see the following verses:

Indeed successful are the believers, those who in their prayersare humble and those who keep aloof from what is vain (23:1-3). *And the servants of the Beneficent* (God) *are they who walk on the earth humbly; and when the ignorant address them, they say: "Salām* (Peace)*". And those who pass the night in prostrating unto their Lord and standing* (25:63-64).

This is what the Qur'an means when it uses the word, 'believer', without any condition and without any association which would give it another shade of meaning.

God has said, "These are with the believers", rather than saying, "these are among the believers". The reason is that as soon as these qualifications are found in them they are attached to the believers; but they would not be a part of the believers until these characteristics firmly take roots in their hearts.

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَآمَنْتُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾

(4:147) ***Why should Allah chastise you if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is the Appreciator, Knowing.***

Apparently, this verse too, like the preceding speech, is addressed to the believers.They have been addressed in these words as if they were devoid of belief, as speakers use this style in such talks.

The verse indicates that God has no need to chastise them.

Had they not invited the punishment by discarding gratitude andfaith, there was nothing from the side of God to inflict them with chastisement. God gets no benefit from their punishment nor does Heget any harm by their existence, so that He should be inclined topunish them. The meaning, therefore, is: There is no reason why you should be punished if you express your gratitude for the favors God has bestowed on you by giving Him His due rights and if you truly believe in Him; and God appreciates virtues of him who thanks Him and believes in Him; and He is Allknowing and puts everything in its proper place.

This verse shows that the chastisement which covers some people emanates from their side, not from God's side. Likewise, all the things which invite punishment, like going astray, polytheism and sins and errors, do not originate from God; they are done by the people themselves. If any

of these things had originated from God, then the resulting punishment also would have been from God, because the effect is related to its cause.

Examining Narrations

(1) Zurārah, Humrān and Muhammad b. Muslim have narrated from Abū Jaʾfar and Abū ʿAbdillāh about the words of God: *Surely as for those who believe, then disbelieve, again believe and again disbelieve, then increase in disbelief,* that they said, "It was revealed about ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Sarh, whom ʿUthmān had sent to Egypt as Governor. Then his disbelief increased until not an iota of belief remained in him." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)[1]

(2) Abū Basīr has said: "I heard him (Abū ʿAbdillāh) saying about this same verse: 'Whoever believes that intoxicant is unlawful and then drinks it, and whoever believes that fornication is unlawful and then does it and whoever believes that *zakāt* is *wājib* (obligatory) and does not pay it (are included in this verse)." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This *hadīth* generalizes the verse to cover all stages of disbelief, one of which is neglecting the obligatory commandments and committing forbidden things. It somewhat supports what we have written in the Commentary.

(3) Muhammad b. al-Fudayl narrates from Abu al-Hasan al-Ridā about the words of God: *And indeed we have revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's communications disbelieved in or mocked at,… surely then you would be like them,* that he said, "When you hear a man denying the truth, refuting it and disparaging the people of truth, then stand up from near him and do not sit with him." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: There are other traditions too of the same meaning.

(4) Abu al-Salt al-Harawī narrates from al-Ridā about the words of God: *and Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers*, that he said: "God says that He will by no means give the unbelievers a proof against the believers. God has given us the news about the unbelievers who killed their prophets without any right, yet in spite of their killing them, God had not given

1 Obviously this explanation is based on the principle of the "flow of the Qur'ān". *(tr.)*

them any proof against his prophets." (*ibid.*)

(5) al-Suyūtī writes: "Ibn Jarīr has narrated from ʿAlī about the words of God: *and Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers*, that he said, 'In the hereafter.'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: It has been explained that the context apparently points to the hereafter; but if the sentence is taken separately, on its own, it may be generalized to cover the proof in this world.

(6) al-Sadūq narrates through his chain of narrators from al-Hasan b. Faddāl that he said, "I asked ʿAlī b. Mūsá al-Ridā about the words of God: *Surely the hypocrites strive to deceive Allah, while He is deceiving them.*

"The Imām said, 'God does not deceive; rather He gives them recompense of their deception.'" (*ʿUyūnu al-akhbār*)

(7) Masʾadah b. Ziyād narrates through Jaʾfar b. Muhammad from his father that the Messenger of God was asked, "In what lies the salvation tomorrow?" He said, "Salvation is that you should not deceive God, lest He deceives you; because whoever deceives God, He will deceive him and will take off the *īmān* (faith) from him; and (the man) deceives his own self, had he but known it." Again, it was said to him, "How does one deceive God?" He said, "He performs what God has ordered him to, but his aim is (to please) someone other than God. Therefore, be on guard against dissimulation, because it is associating someone with God. Surely, a dissimulator will be called on the Day of Resurrection with four names: O *kāfir*, O debauchee, O treacherous, O profligate! your deeds are forfeited, your recompense is nullified; there is no share for you today; you seek your recompense from him you were doing for." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(8) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of narrators from Abu al-Maʾzā al-Khassāf that he said, The Commander of the Believers said, "Whoever remembers God, the Mighty, the Great, in secret, He remembers Him most often. Verily, the hypocrites used to remember God openly but did not remember Him in secret; therefore, God, the Mighty, the Great, said: *they do it only to be seen of men and do not remember Allah save a little*". (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: This is another fine meaning for scantiness of remembrance of God.

(9) Ibn al-Mundhir has narrated from ʿAlī that he said, "No deed is small with piety, and how can that be small which is accepted." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: This too is a fine meaning and in reality it goes back to what has been described in the preceding tradition.

(10) Muslim, Abū Dawūd and al-Bayhaqī (in his *Sunan*) have narrated from Anas that he said, "The Messenger of God said, 'That is the prayer of a hypocrite; he remains sitting and looking at the sun until when it reaches between the two horns of Satan, he stands up and pecks (on the earth) four times and does not remember God in it except a little.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This is another meaning of paucity of remembrance because such a worshipper merely turns towards God by standing for prayer and does not get time to remember God while it was possible for him to submerge himself in His remembrance with presence (of heart) and tranquility.

The sun reaching between the two horns of Satan is a metaphor which denotes its nearness from the western horizon. It is as though the day and the night are two horns of satan with which he rams human beings.

(11) ʿAbd Ibn Hamīd, al-Bukhārī (in his *Tārīkh*), Muslim, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Ibn ʿUmar that he said, "The Messenger of God said, 'The likeness of a hypocrite is that of a wandering goat between two flocks, once it goes to this and once to that; it doesn't know which to follow.'" (*ibid.*)

(12) ʿAbdu al-Razzāq, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās, that he said, "Wherever the word *sultān* occurs in the Qur'an, it means 'proof." (*ibid.*)

(13) Ibn Abī Shaybah, al-Marwazī (in *Zawāid al-zuhd*) and Abu al-Shaykh b. Hibbān have narrated from Makhūl that he said, "I have been told that the Prophet said, 'No servant remains sincere to God for forty mornings but the springs of wisdom appears fro his heart on his tongue.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This tradition is a famous one and has been narrated in the same words or with the same meaning through other chains of narrators.

(14) al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī has narrated in *Nawādir al-usūl* from Zayd b. Arqam that he said, "The Messenger of God said, 'Whoever

sincerely says, *Lā ilāha illa 'llāh*, will enter the Garden.' It was said to him, 'O Messenger of God, what is its sincerity? He said, 'That it prevents him from unlawful things.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This tradition's meaning is narrated through numerous chains of narrators in the collections of *ahādīth* (traditions) of the both sects from the Prophet and the Imāms of Ahl al-bayt, may God's mercy and blessings be on them. And, God willing, we shall quote most of its narrated words in some appropriate place.

Many traditions have been written under these verses showing diverse and different reasons of their revelation; we have not quoted them here because apparently they are based on the flow of the Qur'an, which the people have used to fit the verses on some likely events. And God knows better.

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Verses 148-149

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظُلِمَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٨﴾

(4:148) ***Allah does not love open utterance of evil in speech except (by) one to whom injustice has been done; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing***

[*al-Jahr* (loudly speaking; translated here as 'open utterance')]. al-Rāghib has said under the root *j-h-r*:

> "It is used for excessive manifestation of a thing before the sense of sight or hearing. As for the sight, it is said: 'I saw him openly'; God, the Sublime, says: '*O Moses! We will not believe in you until we see Allah manifestly*' (2:55); They said: 'Show us God manifestly' (4:153)… As for hearing, God says: *Alike (to Him) among you is he who conceals (his) words and he who speaks openly* (13:10)."

al-Sūʾ (evil); evil speech refers to every talk which hurts the feeling of the person about who it is said; for example, cursing him and abusing him and accusing him of some bad characteristics, no matter whether those defects are really found in him or not. God does not love that these things should be loudly announced and spoken. It is known that God is free from love and hate, which is found in human beings and many animals; however, as our commandments and prohibitions naturally emanate from love and hate, God metaphorically uses the words, love and hate, to describe His pleasure and displeasure, His commandment and prohibition.

Therefore, the words, "God does not love open utterance of evil in speech", metaphorically show legislation covering both prohibition and dislike.

The phrase, "*except (by) one to whom injustice has been done*", is an isolated exception. It means that it is acceptable for the one who is oppressed and to whom injustice has been done, to loudly speak evil about the oppressor regarding the injustice done to him. This context shows that he is allowed to utter evil publicly to describe the injustice done to him

and to expose the bad character of the oppressor which led him to that injustice. However, there is no indication here that he can speak loudly about other things which are not found in the oppressor or which have no connection with this particular oppression. The exegetes have differed in explanation of "evil in speech"; some say that it means cursing; others say that it is a description of his oppression and injustice, etc.; the fact is that all these things are included in this phrase which is unrestricted. Therefore, there is no reason why it should be restricted to certain types of evil talk.

The words, "and God is Hearing, Knowing", emphasize the prohibition understood from "God does not love open utterance of evil in speech". In other words, it is not allowed for the one to whom injustice has not been done to speak loudly evil words about someone because God is the Hearing Who hears every word, and Knowing Who knows what one is doing.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيرًا ﴿١٤٩﴾

(4:149) ***If you do good openly or do it in secret or pardon an evil, then surely Allah is Pardoning, Powerful***

The verse has some relation with the preceding one because it implies manifestation of good words showing gratitude for a favor which someone has done to you, and also shows merit of forgiveness of an evil, so that you should not utter evil words against your oppressor.

Doing good openly means manifesting it clearly whether it is manifested in deed—for example, showing that one is spending on some deserving person; likewise, other good deeds; as this showing arouses in other people the desire to do good and strengthens the religion—or in words, like openly thanking the benefactor and mentioning him with good attributes, as it would incite other well to do persons to follow the suit.

Keeping the good work secret is also commendable, because it keeps one away from dissimulation and nearer to sincerity, as God has said: *If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to poor, it is better for you; and this will remove from you some of your sins* (2:271).

Pardoning an evil is to cover it in words—that he does not describe his oppressor for his oppression, does not disgrace him before the people and does not speak openly against him—and in deed, that he should not confront him with similar mistreatment for retribution, even when sharīʾah allows him to do so. God has said: *whoever then acts aggressively*

against you, inflict the like aggression on him as he has inflicted on you; and fear Allah (2:194).

If you pardon an evil, you will acquire an attribute from the Divine attributes of perfection—He pardons His servants although He has power to punish them. Doing good deed openly or in secret, that is, doing favor to the needy in all conditions is also among the Divine attributes because He is God.

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Examining Narrations

(1) al-Tabrisī has said: "God does not like abusing while seeking someone's aid except the one to whom injustice has been done; he is allowed to seek help against the oppressor in the matters in which seeking help is allowed by religion." He says that it is narrated from Abū Jaʾfar. (*Majmaʾ al-bayān*)

(2) Abu al-Jārūd narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: "*Open utterance of evil in speech* means describing a man with the defects which are found in him." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(3) Another hadīth explains this verse in this way: If a man came to you and he spoke ascribing to you such merit, praise and good deeds which you do not have, then do not accept it from him and refute him; because he has done injustice to you. (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

(4) al-Fadl b. Abī Qurrah narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh about the words of God: *Allah does not love open utterance of evil in speech except (by) one to whom injustice has been done,* that he said, "Whoever invited some people for feast and did not serve them properly, he is among those who do injustice; and there is no blame on them in whatever they say about him." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: It has been narrated in *Majmaʾ al-bayān* from Abū ʿAbdillāh as a *mursal hadīth;* also it has been narrated through Sunnī chains from Mujāhid. However, these traditions clearly show that the verse is general and not restricted, as we have shown earlier.

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Verses 150-152

Now, the talk turns to the People of the Book describing the reality of their disbelief and explaining some of their injustices, sins and scandalous talks.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٥٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا ۚ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿١٥١﴾

(4:150-151) ***Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and desire to differentiate between Allah and His messengers, and say: "We believe in some and disbelieve in others"; and desire to take a way between (this and) that. These it is that are truly unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement***

These are the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians; the Jews believe in Moses and disbelieve in Jesus and Muhammad while the Christians believe in Moses and Jesus and disbelieve in Muhammad—God's mercy be on all of them. These people think that they believe in God and in some of His messengers and disbelieve in only a few of them; but God has clearly stated that they are disbelievers in God and all His messengers. Therefore, it was necessary to explain the all-encompassing sentence, "Surely those who disbelieve in God and His messengers". This explanation is given in the next phrase which is given as explicative apposition, "and desire to differentiate between God and His messengers, and say: "We believe in some and disbelieve in others". This phrase is self-explanatory. They are disbelievers in God and His Messengers because when they say: "We believe in some and disbelieve in others", they actually want to differentiate between God and His messengers; when they disbelieve in some of His messengers although he has been sent by God, they are rejecting the Divine choice; thus rejection of any messenger is rejection of God's Divinity.

Again it is explained with another explanatory conjunctive, "and desire to take a way between (this and) that". They want to chart out a

way between two opposites: believing in God and all His messengers and disbelieving in God and all His messengers; and that middle way is believing in some and rejecting some others. However, the only way to God is to believe in Him and all His messengers together. A messenger in his capacity of messengership has no authority over his own self or on his mission; everything is done under Divine guidance. To believe in him is to believe in God and to reject him is to reject God.

Disbelieving in some and believing in others together with God is an attempt to differentiate between God and His messengers. In this way, they want to make the messenger independent, unrelated to God. According to the, belief in the prophet has no connection with the belief in God and rejection of a prophet is unconnected with disbelief in God; the messenger is accordingly marginalized and removed from his central position. How can one be called a messenger if believing or disbelieving in him is unrelated to belief or disbelief in God?

Now, it is clear without any doubt that believing in such a messenger is tantamount to ascribing someone to God, the great, the High. That is why God, after describing their attempt to believe in some and disbelieve in others, in order to differentiate between God and His messengers and to find a via media, says that, "These it is that are truly unbelievers", and then threatens them saying, "and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement".

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٥٢﴾

(4:152) ***And those who believe in Allah and His messengers and do not differentiate between any of them; they (are those whom) He will grant them their recompense; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful***

After exposing the disbelief of those who differentiate between God and His messengers, and stating that they were disbelievers in God and all His messengers, now God describes those who stand opposite to them, that is, those who believe in God and all His messengers without any differentiation. This completes the division of the people in two groups. We find in the second and third verses that the pronouns describing God have been changed from first person plural to third person singular; first it was said: *and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement,*

and now it says, "they (are those whom) He will grant them their recompense". Probably, ascribing award of punishment to first person shows that it would surely happen; this certainty is not so clear in third person pronoun; and the same reason justifies the change of pronoun in the second verse. The verse is addressed to the Prophet and contains good tidings. The Prophet knows that God would surely fulfil His promise and this recompense is certain to be awarded.

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Verses 153-169

The verses describe the demand of the People of the Book that the Messenger of God should bring down to them a book from heaven, because they were not satisfied by the piecemeal revelation of the Qur'an through Gabriel, and then replies to it.

يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ ۚ فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا
مُوسَىٰ أَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذَٰلِكَ فَقَالُوا أَرِنَا اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ
بِظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ
ذَٰلِكَ ۚ وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّورَ بِمِيثَاقِهِمْ
وَقُلْنَا لَهُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبْتِ وَأَخَذْنَا
مِنْهُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿١٥٤﴾

(4:153-154) ***The People of the Book ask you to bring down to them a book from heaven; so indeed they had demanded of Moses a greater thing than that, for they said: "Show us Allah manifestly"; so the lightning seized them on account of their injustice. Then they took the calf (for a god) even after clear signs had come to them, but We pardoned this; and We gave to Moses a clear authority. And We lifted the mountain over them at their covenant, and We said to them: "Enter the door prostrating"; and We said to them: "Do not exceed the limits of the Sabbath"; and We took from them a firm covenant.***

"The People of the Book" refers to the Jews and the Christians, as is known from the Qur'anic style in such places. It means that the demand had come from both groups and not only the Jews.

Of course, the injustice and the crimes enumerated in these verses were exclusively committed by the Jews; for example, the demand to see God, the worship of the calf, breaking the covenant when the mountain was raised over their heads and when they were ordered to do *sajdah* (prostration) and prohibited to cross the limits of the sabbath and things

like that. But both groups had grown from the same root, that is, the tribe of Israel (Jacob) to whom Moses and Jesus were sent (although the mission of Jesus spread after his being raised to the heaven to the non-Israelites like Rome, Arabia, Ethiopia and Egypt, etc.) and the injustice done to Jesus by his people was not less than the injustice done by the Jews to Moses.

As the two groups had a common root and the injustice described was done by the Jews only when the time came to describe their punishment, God mentioned only the Jews as He says: *Wherefore for the inequity of those who are Jews, We did forbid them those good things which had been made lawful for them.* And it was because of this common root that the list of the Messengers described later includes Jesus too like Moses; if the talk were reserved to the Jews only, this could not be justified. Also, it is for this reason that after these verses it has been said: *O People of the Book! do not exceed the limits in your religion, and do not speak (lies) against Allah, but (speak) the truth; the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary is only a Messenger of Allah.*

In short, the demand had come from the People of the Book together and the speech is addressed to them both, because they share the national trait, that is, despotism, speaking lies, recklessness and disregard of agreements and covenants. The talk covers both in common characteristics but when any group deserves some special comment, it is mentioned separately.

They had asked the Messenger of God to bring down to them a book from heaven. Obviously, they had not asked it before the Qur'an was revealed and recited before them. This event had taken place in Medina and they had heard the Qur'an as much as was revealed at Mecca and the parts which were revealed at Medina up to that time. Yet, they were not satisfied that it was a sufficient proof of his Prophethood; they were not prepared to count it as a Divine Book, although the Qur'an had been sent armed with the challenge and the claim of its miraculousness, as we see in the chapters of "The Night Journey", "Jonah", "Hūd" and "The Cow", all of which were revealed before this chapter of the "Women".

Clearly, their asking for bringing down a book from the heaven (when they were witnessing the Qur'anic revelation), was merely a foolhardy demand which could not come except from a person who stubbornly refuses to submit to the truth and does not follow the reality. Such a person talks irrationally and raves without thinking, as his desires overpower him; he doesn't stand on any firm ground nor does he feel constrained by any

limit. This arrogance was similar to that which the Quraysh had adopted as soon as the Qur'anic revelations began and its mission became known; as God quotes them as saying: *Why is not a sign sent to him from His Lord?* (10:20), *or you should ascend into heaven, and we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read* (17:93). It was in this background that God has replied to their demand.

First: These are a people gone far in their ignorance and straying. They do not desist from any injustice, however great it might be; from disbelief and rejection of truth even when clear proofs have come to them; nor from breaking the covenants however sacred they might be; nor do they avoid falsehood, wrong accusation or any type of injustice. A man of such characteristics does not deserve that his demand be granted or his proposal accepted.

Second: The Book which God has sent down, that is, the Qur'an, contains in itself the witness of God and His angels. Moreover, it offers challenge after challenge in its noble verses.

Continuing the reply, God says: *so indeed they had demanded of Moses a greater thing than that,* that is, greater than what they are asking you, to bring down to them a book from heaven: *for they said: "Show us Allah manifestly",* that is, show Him to us clearly so that we see Him with our eyes; this was the peak of ignorance, delirium and transgression; *so the lightening seized them on account of their injustice.* The story is mentioned in the chapter of "The Cow" (vrs. 55-56) and that of "The Elevated Places" (vr. 155).

Then God says: *Then they took the calf (for a god) even after clear signs had come to them,* they indulged in this idol-worship when its falsity was clearly shown to them and it was explained to them that God is far from the taint of corporal traits and transience; and this was the most heinous ignorance: *but We pardoned this; and We gave to Moses a clear authority. Mose*s had ordered them in this connection to repent to God by killing each other; they started doing it but God pardoned them before the killings had taken toll of them all; and this is what pardon means in this verse. He gave Moses clear authority inasmuch as his orders were implemented on them and on al-Sāmirī and his calf. This story is mentioned in the chapter of "The Cow" (vr. 54).

Then God says: *And We lifted the mountain over them at their covenant.* It was the covenant which God had taken from them and then raised the mountain over them. The story has been described twice in the chapter of

"The Cow" (vrs. 63 & 93). Further, God says: *and We said to them: "Enter the door prostrating"; and We said to them: "Do not exceed the limits of the Sabbath"; and We took from them a firm covenant*. The two stories are mentioned in the chapter of "The Cow" (vrs. 58-65) and the chapter of "The Elevated Places" (vrs. 161-163). Probably, the covenant mentioned here is related to these two stories as well as others, because the Qur'an repeatedly mentions making the covenant with them, as God says: *And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel: "You shall not worship (any) but Allah;… "* (2:83); *and when We made a covenant with you: "You shall not shed your blood and you shall not turn your people out of your cities"; then you gave a promise while you witnessed* (*ibid*.: 84).

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۚ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٥٥﴾

(4:155) *Therefore, for their breaking their covenant and their disbelief in the communications of Allah and their killing the prophets unjustly and their saying: "Our hearts are covered"; Nay! Allah has set a seal upon them owing to their disbelief, so they shall not believe except a little.*

The particle *Fa* (therefore) shows that the coming statement has resulted from the preceding ones. "For their breaking their covenant" refers to their crimes mentioned after a few verses. These verses aim at describing the humiliating recompense which God has reserved for them in this world and the hereafter. They also describe some of their evil characteristics not mentioned before.

The words of God, "Therefore for their breaking their covenant", refers together to their breaking the covenant, some of which have been mentioned in the Qur'an and some have not. "And their disbelief in the communications of God", refers to their various types of disbelief which they committed during the life of Moses and after him. The Qur'an has described several instances of it including the two mentioned in the beginning of the verses, that is: *So indeed they had demanded of Moses a greater thing than that, for they said: "Show us Allah manifestly", and: they took a calf (for a god) even after clear signs had come to them*. These

two instances of their disbelief were described before other things in the beginning, but have been put here after the description of their breaking the covenant; because the context is different. Beginning of the verses mentions their demand to bring down a book from heaven and it was more relevant to follow it with their asking something greater than that and their worshipping the calf. But the verse under discussion describes their recompense for their evil deeds after their accepting the call to the truth; and in this context beginning the speech with description of their breaking their covenant was more appropriate.

The phrase: *and their killing the prophets unjustly*, points to Zachariah, John and other prophets whom the Qur'an has mentioned without naming. Then God says: *and their saying: "Our hearts are covered"*: *Ghulf* is plural of *aghlaf* (under cover) which prevents it from listening to the prophetic call and accepting the truth. They uttered this sentence in order to reject the call and at the same time putting the responsibility of that rejection on God. In a way they claimed that their hearts were put under cover by God, or that they could not hear any call except that of Moses, and all this was beyond their choice and authority. That is why God has refuted their claim by saying: *Nay! Allah has set a seal upon them owing to their disbelief, so they shall not believe except a little*. Thus, it is explained that the refusal of their hearts to listen to the true call is connected to the Divine creation, but not in the sense which they were claiming that they had no hand in it. Rather, God has done it to them because of their disbelief and denial of truth, and consequently these people will not believe except a few of them. We have described in detail about this exception; they were afflicted with this Divine retribution as a society and nation. The whole group taken together is under that punishment and their hearts have been sealed and it is impossible for that society to believe in the Prophet, although a few of them may enter into the fold of Islam.

وَبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٥٦﴾

(4:156) ***And for their disbelief and for their having uttered against Mary a grievous calumny.***

It refers to their calumny against Mary that Jesus was a product of fornication. It is disbelief and false accusation all together; and Jesus had talked to them soon after his birth and said: *"Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet."* (19:30).

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ ۚ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا ﴿١٥٧﴾

(4:157) ***And for their saying: "Surely we have killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah"; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Jesus); and most surely those who differ therein are only in doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture; and certainly they killed him not***

It was described in the stories of Jesus in ch.3 that they had different versions concerning his killing: whether it was by crucifixion or some other means. God first mentions their claim of killing the Messiah, then refutes their claim joining the killing and crucifixion together; probably this mode has been adopted for total refutation, in order to remove all possible doubts; crucifixion is a special method of torture but it does not necessarily lead to killing and when killing is mentioned, crucifixion doesn't come into mind. [Therefore, refuting killing and crucifixion together refutes the idea of Jesus' death altogether.]

If only the killing were refuted, it was possible to say that they had not killed him in normal way, that he could have been killed by crucifixion. That is why God added after "they did not kill him" the words, "nor did they crucify him" to make the meaning utmost clear. Then He says explicitly that Jesus did not die on their hands, neither by crucifixion nor in any other way; rather it appeared to them so. They caught another person in place of the Messiah and killed him or crucified him. This could have happened easily in those circumstances; in such a riotous and barbaric mobs often the actual target slips away and some other person is held and beaten up. He was arrested by the Roman soldiers who had no full prior knowledge of his features and conditions; it was possible for them to catch someone else in his place. Moreover, there are traditions saying that God had put his likeness on another person who was caught and killed in his place.

Some research scholars of history have written that the historical stories recorded about Jesus and the events connected with his call as well as the stories of his contemporaries among the rulers and preachers fit

completely on two persons, both named the Messiah, and the time gap between them is of more than 500 years. The earlier one was the true Messiah but he was not killed and the later one was the false Messiah who was crucified. According to that scholar it is doubtful whether the present Christian calendar is correct. In that case, what the Qur'an mentions as 'appearance' would refer to the similarity of the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God, with the crucified Messiah.

And most surely those who differ therein, that is, differ about Jesus or about his killing: *are only in doubt about it,* that is, they are ignorant of his affairs, *they have no knowledge respecting it; but only follow a conjecture,* that is, they surmise according to what they have been told by others without firm knowledge: *and certainly they killed him not,* it may also be translated as: 'they did not kill him, I give you the confirmed news'.

Someone has said that the pronoun 'him' in "they did not kill him" refers to knowledge in the preceding sentence, that is, they did not kill the knowledge certainly; according to the dictionary, killing of knowledge means purifying it from doubt and suspicion. Some others have said that the pronoun refers to conjecture, that is, they did not verify their conjecture. These meanings are very strange and the Qur'anic words do not tolerate them.

بَل رَّفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٥٨﴾

(4:158) *Nay! Allah raised him up to Himself; and Allah is Mighty, Wise.*

God has narrated this story in the chapter of "The Family of 'Imrān" where He says: *And when Allah said: "O Jesus I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me"* (3:55). So, this verse mentions first his being taken away and then his being raised.

The context of the verse refutes their claim that they had killed and crucified Jesus. Rather he was protected from murder and crucifixion. Also, it is clear that the one about whom the claims of murder and crucifixion were made (that is, Jesus, with his body) was the one whom God raised to Him and saved him from their conspiracy. In short, Jesus was raised up with his body and soul together. It was not that he had died and then his soul was raised to God, because the context of the verse doesn't agree with such a hypothesis; the adverb, 'rather', would be meaningless if it were to show that his soul was raised up after death, because such

raising up could happen even after his murder or natural death.

This raising up was a sort of rescue with which God saved him from their hands. [This verse by itself does not make it clear] whether he had died at that time a natural death or by some means other than murder and crucifixion or was alive and God had given him perpetual life in a way we do not know. It was not impossible for God to give death to Jesus and then raise him and protect him; or He could preserve his life in some extra-natural way. This phenomenon is not different from other events described in the Qur'an regarding Jesus's miracles concerning his birth and his life among his people as well as the miracles of Abraham, Moses, Sālih, and others. All that is in the same category; the Book of God confirms those happenings so clearly that they cannot be ignored. Of course, some people had tried to reinterpret those miracles thinking that such supernatural events would nullify the general system of the cause and effect; in the first volume of this book, we have discussed in detail the phenomenon of miracle and supernatural events.[1]

However, the next verse proves or points that Jesus is alive and has not died yet.

وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ ۖ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾

(4:159) ***And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Resurrection, he (Jesus) shall be a witness against them.***

The third person singular pronouns in "believe in him" and "he shall be" refer to Jesus. As for the pronoun in "before his death" there are various interpretations:

Some people have said: The pronoun refers to 'one' in "one of the People of the Book", meaning: each and every one among the People of the Book will believe in Jesus before that one dies. It will become clear to him just before his death that Jesus was the Messenger of God and His servant; even though that faith at that time will not benefit him at all, and Jesus will be a witness over them all on the Day of Judgement. It makes no difference whether they believed in him in a way that was beneficial to

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.1, pp.106-127 (*tr.*)

them or at a time when it was of no avail like believing at the time of death.

If we say that the pronoun "before his death" refers to Jesus, it would support what has been narrated in some traditions that Jesus is alive, has not died and that he will come down before the Day of Resurrection and then the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians, will believe in him. But this interpretation particularizes, without any reason, the generality of the phrase, "and there is not one of the People of the Book". But according to this explanation, the verse would mean that only those People of the Book would believe in Jesus who would be present when he would come down from the heavens, while all others who came and went after his being raised and before his coming down would not believe in him. This restricts without any reason the general meaning of the verse.

However, some have opted for this explanation and said that thepronoun refers to Jesus and points to their belief in him at the time of his coming down from heaven in the last days. This view relies on a tradition as we have mentioned above.

But the verse with its two parts clearly shows that Jesus will be a witness on all of them on the Day of Resurrection as will all of them believe in him before death. And God has quoted the speech of Jesus regarding this evidence in a particular way: *And I was a witness over them so long as I was among them; when You did take me up You were the watcher over them and You are witness over all things* (5:117). In this verse, Jesus limits his evidence for the period when he was alive among them before his being taken away, and the verse under discussion says that he would be a witness over all those who could believe in him; now if all would believe in him it means that he would not die but after all of them. This brings us to the second interpretation, that is, he is alive until now and he will return to them again so that they could believe in him. Utmost that can be said is that the one who will not be present when he will return to them second time will believe in him at the time of his death and the one who will be present at that time will have to believe in him whether willingly or under compulsion.

This verse coming after the Divine words: *and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so;… Rather Allah raised him up to Himself, and Allah is Mighty, Wise*, indicates that Jesus has not died and is still alive; because there seems no useful purpose in saying that all of them would believe in him under compulsion. This supports the view that their believing in Jesus before death refers to their believing

in him before Jesus' death.

However, there are other verses which apparently go somehow against it. For example: *And when Allah said: O Jesus I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you of those who disbelieve, and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the Day of Resurrection* (3:55). It shows that some disbelievers in Jesus will continue up to the Day of Resurrection. Also, the verse:… *and their saying: "Our hearts are covered"; Nay! Allah has set a seal upon them owing to their disbelieve, so they shall not believe except a little",* shows that it is an affliction written against them, and their society, as a Jewish society, will not believe up to the Day of Resurrection. Also, the verse: *And I was a witness over them so long as I was among them; when You did take me up You were the watcher over them* (5:117), shows that they will be continuing after Jesus was taken away completely.

However, the fact is that these three verses do not go against the idea of Jesus being alive. The verse:… *and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the Day of Resurrection*, doesn't say that they would continue up to the Day of Resurrection with their identity as the People of the Book. Likewise, the Divine words: *Nay! Allah has set a seal upon them owing to their disbelief, so they shall not believe except a little*, only says that the true belief will not be accepted by all of them together and if at sometime they believed, that belief would cover only a few of them. Moreover, if the verse, "And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death", shows that they would believe in him before his death, it only mentions the belief, per se; it does not say that it would be an acceptable belief.

Likewise, the verse: *When You did take me up You were the watcher over them*, refers to the people, not to the Christians or the People of the Book, because the verse begins with these words: *And when Allah will say: "O Jesus son of Mary! did you say to the people, take me and my mother two gods beside Allah?"* (5:116). Apart from that, Jesus, as one of the *ulu al-ʿazm* Messengers, was sent to all the people, and when he will give evidence over their deeds it would cover the Israelites as well as others, whether they believed in him or continued as unbelievers.

In short, the verses, seen in their context and in conjunction with other related verses, show that Jesus did not die; he was not killed nor crucified nor did he die a natural death as we have mentioned earlier and we have written on this subject under the verse: *O Jesus I am going to take you away*

completely… (3:55) in the third volume of this book.[1]

A very strange explanation has been given by al-Zamakhsharī in *Tafsīr al-kashshāf.* He says: "This verse could possibly be interpreted in this way that there is none among all the People of the Book but he will believe in Jesus; God will give them life in their graves at the time of coming down of Jesus and will inform them of his coming down and why he has come; so they will believe in him when their believing will give them no benefit. Is it not the belief of *al-rajʾah* (partial return)?"

There are some other unsound explanations written for this verse:

al-Zajjāj appears to think that the pronoun, "before his death" refers to the individual man of the Book. In other words, all of them unitedly say that we believe in that Jesus who will appear in later days. It is a ridiculous interpretation because the verses describe their claim of killing and crucifying Jesus and refutes that claim. It does not deal directly with their disbelief in Jesus and it has no connection with their accepting that the Messiah will appear in the later days to revive and restore the honor of the Israeli nation. Moreover, if that were the intended meaning, there was no need to say "before his death" because the meaning would have been clear without this phrase, and the same would be the case with the sentence. *And on the day of Resurrection he* (Jesus) *shall be a witness over them,* because there would be no need for such a statement at all.

Some exegetes have said that the verse means: and there is no one of the Book but he must certainly believe in Muhammad before the death of that man of the Book.

It is just like the previous explanation in absurdity, because there was no mention of Muhammad in the preceding verses, so that the pronoun could refer to him; nor is this interpretation relevant to the theme of the verses. So, it is a claim without any proof. Of course, this meaning has been given in some traditions as we will read in the coming traditions but that is on the principle of the Qur'an as we shall describe; and such applications have been given very often in traditions as is known to everyone who looks minutely in such traditions.

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبَاتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ
عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.6, pp.33-39. *(tr.)*

(4:160) ***Wherefore for the inequity of those who are Jews, We did forbid them those good things which had been made lawful for them, and for their hindering many from Allah's way.***

"Wherefore" shows that the coming statement is a result of what has been described so far. "Inequity" has been used as a common noun to show the greatness of their injustice or to cover it in vagueness (because no important purpose depends on identifying their inequities). This one word refers to some of their transgressions and inequities mentioned earlier. It doesn't refer to all the inequities mentioned above but only to some of them. God had forbidden some of the good things to them because of that inequity, and it was forbidden in the sharīʾah of Moses which was revealed in the Torah; while some of the inequities were committed by them long after Moses, for example, slandering Mary, etc. That is why we have said that the word, 'inequity', refers to some of their great transgressions because of which some good things were forbidden to them after they had been made lawful.

The verse goes on to say: *and for their hindering many from Allah's way.* it refers to their repeated deviation from the way of God: *And for their taking interest, though indeed they were forbidden it, and their devouring the property of people wrongfully.*

وَأَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبَا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ ۚ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٦١﴾

(4:161) ***And for their taking interest, though indeed they were forbidden it, and their devouring the property of people wrongfully; and We have prepared for the unbelievers from among them a painful chastisement.***

It is in conjunction with: *We did forbid them.* Because of their inequities, they had attracted two punishments from God; one in this world which affected all of them and that was the forbidding of some previously legalized good things; the other concerns the life hereafter which is reserved for the unbelievers among them and that is a painful chastisement.

لَٰكِنِ الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ ۚ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ

بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أُولَٰئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٦٢﴾

(4:162) ***But the firmly rooted in knowledge among them and the believers believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you, and those who keep up prayers and those who give the zakāt and the believers in Allah and the Last Day, these it is whom We will give a mighty reward***

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It is a sort of exception and emendation separating some persons from the People of the Book. "The firmly rooted in knowledge" and "the believers" are the subject and "believe" is predicate; "among them" is connected with "the firmly rooted in knowledge" and "among" shows partialness.

Apparently, the word "the believers" too has a connection with "among them". thus the meaning will be: but the firmly rooted in knowledge and the true believers from among the People of the Book believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you. This meaning gets support from the next verse which says: *Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah?…* Apparently, the verse wants to say that they have believed in you because they have realized that your prophethood and the revelation which We have sent to you is similar to the revelation which was brought to them by the previous prophets of God, Noah and the prophets after him, and the prophets from the progeny of Abraham and progeny of Jacob and the others whose stories we have not told you and there is no difference between these revelations.

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You will appreciate that this meaning is more appropriate for the believers among the People of the Book than for the believers from the Arabs about whom God has said: *That you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless* (36:6).

"And those who keep up prayers" is in conjunction with "the firmly rooted in knowledge", but unlike the "firmly rooted" it is in accusative case to emphasize their praise. Likewise, "those who give the *zakāt*" is in conjunction with the same. "The believers in God and the Last Day" is the subject and "these it is whom We will give a mighty reward" is its predicate. In the Qur'an of Ibn Mas'ūd, "those who keep up prayers" was in nominative case and according to that, all the four adjectival phrases would be the subject, and "these it is whom We will give a mighty reward" its predicate.

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al-Tabrisī has said in *Majma' al-bayān*: "The grammarians have differed

as to why 'those who keep up prayers' has been revealed in accusative case. Sībawayh and the scholars of Basrah have said that it is meant so to describe their praise." [Then after mentioning some other interpretations, he says:] "There is a narration of ʿUrwah from ʿĀ'ishah that he asked her about the Divine words, 'those who keep up prayers', and, *the Sabeans* [5:69], a*nd, these two are certainly two sorcerers* [20:63], and she said, 'O my nephew! This is the work of the scribes; they made mistakes in writing'. And there is a narration from some of them [ʿUthmān] that, 'there are some [ungrammatical] words in the Book of God and the Arabs will soon correct it by their tongues.' And some of them has said that the phrase: 'those who keep up prayers' was in the nominative case in the Qur'an of Ibn Masʾūd. But such reports are not worthy of attention; the companions could not teach the people wrong recitals because they were the leaders and had learnt the words of the Qur'an from the Prophet."

The phrase, "but the firmly rooted in knowledge", is the exception from the People of the Book. As we have explained earlier, their demand from the Prophet that he should bring down to them a book from heaven meant that what the prophet had brought to them—the Book and the Wisdom—which confirmed the Divine communications revealed to the Prophets and Messengers before him, was not enough to attract them to the truth and prove its veracity, while in reality the Prophet had not brought to them but what the prophets before him had brought to their people and he lived among them and with them exactly as they had lived among and with their people. God says: *Say: "I am not first of the Messengers…"* (46:9); *And We did not send before you any but men to whom We sent revelation, so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know. And We did not make them bodies not eating the food, and they were not to abide (for ever)… certainly We have revealed to you a Book in which is your good remembrance; what! Do you not then understand?* (21:7-10).

Thus, God describes about those People of the Book that they do not have a disposition to follow the truth nor they are firm in their views; they have no determination nor any opinion. There were many clear signs which they neglected and many calls to the truth from which they hindered the people. Of course, those among them who are firmly rooted in knowledge (because of their firmness in their knowledge and the clarity of the truth before their eyes), and likewise, those who are true believers among them (because they are disposed to follow the truth), these two groups of people believe in what has been revealed to you and what was

revealed before you, as they have found out that what has been revealed to you is similar to what was revealed to all the prophets before you—Noah and other prophets who came after him.

It appears from the above that:

(1) The reason why those People of the Book who followed the Prophet have been given the adjectives "firmly rooted in knowledge", and "the believers". The previous verses have adversely commented on the People of the Book that they are not firmly rooted in what they have known, are not firm on any truth even if it was entrusted to them with very firm covenants, and they do not believe on the communications of God and hinder people from them even when clear proofs have come to them. In this backdrop, these people whom God has excepted are firmly rooted in knowledge and true believers.

(2) The reason why the previously revealed Books have been mentioned with the Qur'an in the phrase, "believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you". The purpose is to show that there is no difference between the two revelations.

(3) The Divine words in the coming verse: *Surely We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Noah and the prophets after him*", describe the reason of the belief of these believers.

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۚ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَىٰ وَأَيُّوبَ
وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ ۚ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا ﴿١٦٣﴾

(4:163) ***Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah, and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David Zabūr***

As we have said just now, it gives the reason for their belief. The meaning: They have believed in what has been revealed to you because We have not given you any new thing, new claim or new aspect which was not found with the previous prophets. The whole affair runs on one system without any difference. We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. Noah was the first prophet to come with the Book and a sharī'ah. It is the same as We revealed to Abraham

and later to his progeny. These People of the Book know them and understand how they were sent and how they called their people to the Right Path; some were given a Book as David was given *Zabūr* [Psalms] which was a prophetic revelation. Moses was addressed directly and that was another type of prophetic revelation; and there were others like Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob who were sent without any Book and they too received prophetic revelations.

Whatever their peculiarities, all of them were messengers giving good news of Divine reward and warning against Divine punishment. God had sent them to complete His proof against the people, as they were to explain what was beneficial for them in this life and the hereafter and what was harmful, in order that the people should not have any proof against God after coming of the messengers.

…the tribes,…: It was explained under the verse: *and Jacob and the tribes* (3:84) that the word refers to the prophets from the progeny of Jacob.

…and We gave to David, Psalms* (Zabūr)*: It is said that the word *al-Zabūr* means 'the written'; they say *Zabarahu* (he wrote it), thus *al-Zabūr* is synonymous with *al-mazbūr* (the written).

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ۚ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾ رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٦٥﴾

(4:164-165) ***And (We sent) messengers We have mentioned to you before and messengers We have not mentioned to you; and Allah addressed His word to Moses directly speaking. (We sent) messengers as the givers of good news and as warners, so that people should not have an argument against Allah after the (coming of) messengers; and Allah is Mighty, Wise.***

As translated, the word "messengers" is the object and "givers of good news and warners" are its adjectives. It may also be translated as: The messengers, the givers of good news and the warners; in which case all three words will be circumstantial words.

In ch.2 vr.213 (in vol.2)[1], we have extensively discussed the meaning

1 *al-Mīzān*, (Eng.), vol.3, pp.167-227 (*tr.*)

of sending of the messengers and completion of proof by God against the people, and that the reason alone is not sufficient to guide the people on the right path unless the prophets are sent with Divine Laws.

…and Allah is Mighty, Wise: When unlimited power and unlimited wisdom is reserved for God, then it is impossible for anyone to prevail over Him in argument. Rather, the conclusive proofs are with Him. God says: *Say: "Then Allah's is the conclusive argument"* (6:149).

لَٰكِنِ اللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ ۖ أَنْزَلَهُ بِعِلْمِهِ ۖ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَشْهَدُونَ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿١٦٦﴾

(4:166) ***But Allah bears witness by what He has revealed to you that He has revealed it with His Knowledge; and the angels bear witness (also); and sufficient is Allah for a witness.***

It is sort of isolated exception from the rejection of their demand that the Prophet should bring down to them a Book from the heaven. What God has described in refutation of their demand beginning with: *So indeed they had demanded of Moses a greater thing…,* means that their demand has been rejected. The reason for the rejection is that whatever has been brought by the Prophet through the Divine Revelation is certainly not different from the revelations brought by all other prophets. Whoever claims that he believes in what was brought by those prophets is duty—bound to believe in what has been brought by this prophet—without any difference. Now, God adds that He bears witness by what He has revealed to His Prophet and the angels bear witness too and God is sufficient for a witness. The item witnessed is that "He has revealed it with His knowledge". Merely coming down from the heavens was not sufficient to prove the claim because it could have been done through satanic agencies. The Satan could have polluted the affairs of Divine guidance by opening in front a wrong path in place of the right one; or he could have mixed some falsity in the Divine revelation to confuse the minds. God has pointed to such pollution by refuting it in these words: *The Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as a messenger; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him, so that He may know that they have truly delivered the messages of their Lord, and He encompasses what is with them, and He records the number of all things* (72:26-28).

Also, God says:… *and most surely the Satans inspire their friends…* (6:121). In short, giving witness for coming down of, or sending down the Book, still leaves the claim somewhat in ambiguity; but the words, "with His Knowledge", make the meaning crystal clear, and show that God has revealed it to His Messenger, and He knew what He was revealing; He encompasses him and protects him from deception of the Satan.

This witness is for revelation and revelation was through the angels, as is clear from the words of God: *Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel: for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's command…"* (2:97); and He has said describing this honored angel: *Most surely it is the Word of an honored Messenger, the possessor of strength, an honorable place with the Lord of the Dominion, One (to be) obeyed, and faithful in trust* (81:19-21). The adjective, "one (to be) obeyed", shows that there are other angels under his command and it is they who are mentioned in ch.80, vrs.11-16: *Nay! Surely it is an admonishment. So let him who pleases mind it; in honorable books, exalted, purified in the hands of (Our) ambassadors, noble, virtuous.* In short, as the angels were the means of bringing the revelation to the Prophet, so they too are witnesses like God and God is sufficient as a witness.

To see how God has borne witness for the Qur'an, we should look into the verses which have thrown challenges to the adversaries. For example: *Say: "If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others"* (17:88); *Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy* (4:82); *Say: "Then bring a chapter like this and invite whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful."* (10:38).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾

(4:167) *Surely (as for) those who disbelieve and hinder (men) from Allah's way they indeed have strayed off into a far error.*

The preceding verses have described the convincing argument for the messengership of His Messenger showing that his Book was revealed from God; also that it is the same sort of revelation that was sent to the prophets before him, and that it is accompanied by the witness of God and His angels, and enough is He for a witness. Now, this verse establishes the error of those who disbelieve in Him and hinder others even if they

are from the People of the Book.

The speech started with the topic of revelation of the Book from God. Now, the word, 'Book', has been changed to God's way (*hinder men from Allah's way*). This simple change has beautifully abbreviated a lengthy premises. It is as though it says: Surely, as for those who disbelieve and hinder men from this Book and from the revelation it contains, they are the disbelievers who hinder people from God's way, and those who disbelieve and hinder men from God's way…

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا ﴿١٦٨﴾ إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٦٩﴾

(4:168-169) ***Surely (as for) those who disbelieve and act unjustly, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to a path, except the path of Hell, to abide in it forever, and this is easy to Allah.***

It re-emphasizes the reality mentioned in the preceding verse. Accordingly, injustice would point to their hindering men from the way of God as is clear in this context. Also, possibly this verse gives the reason of their straying into a remote error. The meaning is clear.

Examining Narrations

(5) It is narrated in *Tafsīr al-burhān* under the Divine words: *and for their having uttered against Mary a grievous calumny,* from Ibn Bābawayh through his chain from ʿAlqamah that al-Ṣādiq said, *inter alia*, in a *hadīth*: "Did they not ascribe to Maryam bint ʿImrān that she was impregnated by a carpenter named Joseph?"

(6) al-Qummī writes under the words of God: *And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death.* "Narrated to me my father, from al-Qāsim b. Muhammad, from Solomon b. Dawūd al-Minqarī, from Abū Hamzah, from Shahr b. Hawshab that he said, 'al-Hajjāj said to me, "O Shahr! One verse of the Book of God has fatigued me." I said, "O Amīr! which verse is it?" He said, "The verse: *And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death.* By God! Certainly I sentence a Jew or a

Christian and he is beheaded. And I stare at him but I don't see him moving his lips until he dies." I said, "May God ameliorates the Amīr! This verse doesn't mean what you have interpreted." He said, "How is it?" I said, "Surely Jesus will come down to this world before the Day of Resurrection. Then no follower of any religion, Jew or non-Jew, will remain but he would believe in him before his death and he will pray behind al-Mahdī." He said, "Woe unto thee! From where did you get it, and whence have you brought it?" I said, "Narrated it to me Muhammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Husayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib." He said, "By God! You have brought it from a pristine spring.'" " (*al-Tafsīr*)

(7) al-Suyūtī writes: Ibn al-Mundhir has narrated from Shahr b. Hawshab that he said, "al-Hajjāj said to me, 'O Shahr! There is a verse in the Book of God that whenever I read it, something happens against it in my mind. God has said: *And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death;* and prisoners are brought before me and I kill them but I do no hear them saying anything.' I said to him, 'This has not been explained to you in a correct way. When a Christian dies, the angels hit from the front and from behind and say: "O wicked! The Messiah about whom you believed that he was god or son of god or one of the three persons is (in fact) servant of God, His Spirit and His Word." So, he believes when his belief would not benefit him at all. And when a Jew dies, the angels hit him from the front and from behind and say: "O wicked! The Messiah whom you thought that you had killed him is (in fact) the servant of God and His Spirit." So, he believes in Jesus when that belief would not benefit him at all. At the time of coming down of Jesus, the living People of the Book will believe in him as their dead ones had believed.'He said, 'From where have you taken it?' I said, 'From Muhammad b. ʿAlī.' He said, 'Surely you have taken it from its mine.'" Then Shahr said, "By God! No one had narrated it to me except Umm Salamah; but I liked to irritate him." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: al-Suyūtī has also narrated it in abbreviated form from ʿAbd b. Hamīd and Ibn al-Munthir, from Shahr b. Hawshab, from Muhammad b. ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib (and that is Ibn al-Hanafiyyah). Apparently, Shahr b. Hawshab had narrated from Muhammad b. ʿAlī but the later

narrators differed in identification whether it was Ibn al-Hanafiyyah or al-Bāqir. However, as you see the tradition supports the explanation we gave earlier for this verse.

(8) al-Suyūtī says: Ahmad, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and al-Bayhaqī (in *al-Asmāʾ wa al-sifāt*) have narrated that the Messenger of God said, "How will your condition be when the Son of Mary will descend among you and your Imām will be from among you?" (*ibid.*)

(9) Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Abū Hurayrah that he said: The Messenger of God has said, "It is not far that will descend among you the son of Mary, a just ruler; he will kill Dajjāl and the pig, and will break the cross, and will remove the *jizyah* and will take over the property and there will be one *sajdah* for God, the Lord of the worlds. Read if you want: *And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death,* before the death of Jesus son of Mary." (Abū Hurayrah repeated this phrase three times) (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: There are nearly *mutawātir* traditions describing descension of Jesus at the time of the appearance of al-Mahdī from the Sunnī chains of narrators and likewise, from the Shīʾī chains from the Prophet and the Imāms of the Ahl al-bayt.

(10) al-Hārith b. Mughīrah narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh about the words of God: *And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Resurrection, he* (Jesus) *shall be a witness over them that* he said, "It means the Messenger of God. (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: Its apparent meaning goes against the apparent context of the verses which deal with the affairs of Jesus. Yet, it is possible to justify it on the principle of the flow of the Qur'an. Then the meaning will be as follows: When the Messenger of God was sent and he brought a Book and a sharīʾah which abrogated the sharīʾah of Jesus, then it was incumbent on all the People of the Book to believe in him, and the belief in Muhammad included the belief in Jesus and other preceding prophets. Now, if a man of the Book comes to realize at the time of his death after the advent of Muhammad that Jesus was true messenger then that realization will come together with the realization of the veracity of Muhammad's messengership. In this way, a man of the Book would only be counted as believing in Jesus if he believed in Muhammad in the first

place and in Jesus as a secondary matter. It is Muhammad, after the advent of Islam, in whom every man of the Book should believe in reality and it is he who will be a witness over them on the Day of Resurrection although, Jesus' position is similar to this and there is no contradiction in both beliefs; and the following tradition somewhat shows the same meaning.

(11) Ibn Sinān narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh concerning the words of God: *And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Resurrection, he (Jesus) shall be a witness over them,* that he said, "The belief of the People of the Book will be for Muhammad." (*ibid.*)

(12) Jābir narrates from Abū Jaʾfar that he said concerning the same verse, "There is no one from all the religions but, when dying, he certainly sees the Messenger of God and the Commander of the Believers, be he from the ancient ones or the later (people)." *(ibid.)*

Author's comment: Obviously, the tradition is based on the flow of the Qur'an. Apart from that, the tradition does not say clearly that what the Imām had mentioned was as an exegesis of the verse; there is a possibility that it was a separate matter which the Imām described when speaking on this verse. We may find such examples in the traditions.

(13) al-Mufaddal b. ʿUmar said, "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh about the words of God: *And there is not one of the People of the Book but he must certainly believe in him before his death.* The Imām said, 'This verse was revealed especially about us. No one from the progeny of Fātimah dies and departs from this world until he acknowledges the Imām and his Imāmate; as the sons of Jacob acknowledged (the superiority of) Joseph when they said: *"By Allah! Allah has certainly chosen you over us."* [12:91].'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: The tradition is a solitary one and it is *mursal*. There are other traditions of the same meaning which have been narrated under the words of God: *Then We made inheritors of the Book those whom We chose from among Our servants; and of them is he who causes himself to suffer a loss, and of them is he who follows the middle course, and of them is he who is the foremost in goodness by Allah's permission: This is that which is the greatest excellence* (35:32); and we shall write there on this topic in detail, God willing.

(14) Zurārah and Humrān have narrated from Abū Jaʾfar and Abū ʿAbdillāh that they said: *"Surely We have revealed to you as We*

have revealed to Noah? and the prophets after him. Thus every revelation was gathered for him (Muhammad)." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: Apparently, it means that the revelation sent to the Holy Prophet was not unfamiliar to them which would have caused deviation from the path and difference in the prophetic call. It doesn't mean that every revelation sent to every prophet with all its peculiarities was sent to the Messenger of God, because such a notion has no meaning. Nor does it mean that the revelation sent to him is so comprehensive that all previous sharīʾahs are included in it, because the topic of the verse is unrelated to this them. The following tradition supports the meaning given by us.

(15) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chains from Muhammad b. Sālim that Abū Jaʾfar said, "God said to Muhammad: *Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him;* and every prophet was ordered (to follow) the way and (the good) custom." (*al-Kāfī*)

(16) Abū Hamzah al-Thumālī narrates from Abū Jaʾfar that he said, "And there were between Adam and Noah prophets unknown and manifest and for this reason, they were not mentioned in the Qur'an, they were not named as the manifest prophets have been named and this is the meaning of the words of God, the Mighty, the Great: *And messengers We have mentioned unto you, and Allah spoke to Moses; directly discoursing* [4:164]. It means that I have not named the hidden prophets as I have named the manifest ones." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: This tradition has been narrated in al-Kāfī from ʿAlī b. Abraham, from his father, from al-Hasan b. Mahbūb, from Muhammad b. Fudayl, from Abū Hamzah, from Abū Jaʾfar; and that tradition says: "There were among the prophets who remained concealed and that is why they were not mentioned in the Qur'an, they were not named as were named the manifest prophets; and this is the word of God, the Mighty, the Great: *And messengers We have (already) mentioned to you before and messengers We have not mentioned to you."* It means that I have not named the hidden prophets as I have named the manifest ones. In any case, the tradition means to say that God did not mention the stories or the names of those prophets who had remained unknown, while He has mentioned the stories of some of the well-known prophets and named some of them. The words "It means that I have not named the hidden prophets… " could possibly be from the narrators.

(17) Abū Hamzah al-Thumālī says, "I heard Abū Jaʾfar saying: *'But Allah bears witness by what He has revealed to you* about ʿAlī, *that He has revealed it with His knowledge; and the angels bear witness (also); and sufficient is Allah for a witness.'*" (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: al-Qummī has narrated this theme in his *al-Tafsīr* through his chain of narrators from Abū Basīr, from Abū ʿAbdillāh. It is based on the flow of the Qur'an and applies the verse on a proper example; because there are in the Qur'an verses which were revealed concerning the *wilāyah* of ʿAlī. It doesn't want to say that there was alteration in the Qur'an; nor can it be taken to be a particular recital of this verse by the Imām.

(18) Likewise, it has been narrated in *al-Kāfī* and *al-Tafsīr* of al-ʿAyyāshī from Abū Jaʾfar and in *al-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī from Abū ʿAbdillāh that they recited: *"Surely (as for) those who disbelieve and do injustice* to the progeny of Muhammad (usurping) their right, *Allah is not going to forgive them;* (4:168)." Also it has been narrated in *Majmaʾ al-bayān* from Abū Jaʾfar that he said about the words of God: *"Surely, the Messenger (Muhammad) has come to you with truth,* that is, with the *wilāyah* of him whose *wilāyah* God has ordered. All these traditions are to be interpreted like the previous one.

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Verses 170-175

In the previous section God had rebutted their demand to His Messenger that he should bring to them a book from the heaven; and clearly stated that the Messenger has come with truth from his Lord, and the Book which he has brought from Him was a convincing proof in which there was no doubt. Consequently, it was perfectly right to call in this section all the people to believe in the Messenger of God and the Book brought by him.

It was also described that all His messengers and prophets, including Jesus, were sent on one pattern, with similar framework and comparable religion; and that was the pattern of revelation from God. It was but natural that the Prophet should call the Christians (being the People of the Book and revelation) not to exceed the limit in their religion; rather they should join hands with all other monotheist believers by believing about Jesus what they and others do believe about other prophets: that they were the servants of God and messengers to His creation.

God has begun this section of His speech by calling all the people to believe in His Messenger because the previous section had clearly described the truth of his prophethood when He has said: *Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him…*

Then He calls them not to exceed the limit concerning Jesus because Jesus's status has been described in the above verses.

Then He calls them to follow His Book, that is the Honored Qur'an, because it was described clearly in the last part of the previous section: *But Allah bears witness by what He has revealed to you that He has revealed it with His knowledge…*

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الرَّسُولُ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَآمِنُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٧٠﴾

(4:170) ***O people! Surely the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord, therefore believe, (it shall be) good for you; and if you disbelieve, then surely whatever is in the heavens and***

the earth is Allah's; and Allah is Knowing, Wise.

It is addressed to all the people, be they the People of the Book, or others, and it branches out from the previous speech addressed to the People of the Book. Now, the talk is addressed to the whole mankind because the Prophet's messengership was all-encompassing and the belief in the Messenger was incumbent for all.

The phrase, *khayran lakum* (translated here as: [it shall be] good for you) is grammatically the circumstantial clause of the verb 'believe'. It is a concomitant condition and would literally means: believe as it is inseparable virtue of belief that it is good for you.

…and if you disbelieve, then surely whatever is in the heavens and the earth is Allah's; and Allah is Knowing, Wise: If you disbelieve, that disbelief will not increase anything to you nor decrease anything from God. Everything that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. It is impossible for anyone to take away anything from God because it exclusively belongs to Him. All that is in the heavens and the earth is by nature a property of God who has no partner or colleague. To say that a thing exists, is exactly the same as saying that it belongs to God. How can a thing be removed from God's Ownership as long as it exists?

This verse is a comprehensive and all-encompassing speech; the deeper you contemplate it, the finer the points come before your eyes; and a comprehensive and wondrous vista appears before you. When you will look at the comprehensive Ownership of God which covers the things and their effects, you will find out wonderful connotations of belief and disbelief, obedience and disobedience. It will do you good to ponder on it more and more.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۚ إِنَّمَا
الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ
مِنْهُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ ۚ انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ
إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۖ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ۘ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٧١﴾

(4:171) ***O People of the Book! do not exceed the limits in your religion and do not speak about Allah except the truth; the Messiah,***

Jesus son of Mary is only a Messenger of Allah and His Word which He conveyed to Mary and a spirit from Him; believe therefore in Allah and His messengers, and say not, Three. Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one God: far be it from His glory that He should have a son; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; and Allah is sufficient for a Protector

Apparently, it is addressed to the Christians because it describes the affairs of the Messiah. They have been addressed with the words "People of the Book" which is a common adjective covering Jews and Christians both. But it was preferred because their being among the People of Book demands that they should not exceed the limit of what God has revealed and explained in His Books, and one of the things described therein is that they should not speak about God except the truth.

Also, it could be an address to both the Jews and the Christians because the Jews too were not different from the Christians in their exceeding in religion and speaking about God other than truth, as God has said: *And the Jews say: "ʿUzayr is the son of Allah!"* (9:30). Also, He says: *They have taken their scholars and their monks for Lords besides Allah* (9:31); *Say: "O People of the Book! Come to a word, common between us and you… and (that) some of us shall not take others for Lords besides Allah* (3:64).

In view of this interpretation, the words: *the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary is only a Messsenger of Allah…* narrows the talk after its generality, by addressing a particular group of the audience regarding its particular straying. However, this view does not correspond with the context: The words, "the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary is only a Messenger of God… ", give apparently the reason for the preceding clause, "do not exceed the limits in your religion". [As the two sentences are connected together, it follows that the verse is addressed to the Christians only.] The title, "the Messiah", has been further explained with the words, "'Jesus son of Mary"; this explicit mention of his and his mother's names prevents the word, Messiah, to be explained or applied to some other person. Also, it proves that he was a human being, created, like any human being born of his mother. *and His Word which He conveyed to Mary:* it explains the meaning of the 'word'; he was the word 'Be', which was conveyed to Mary. His creation had not taken place through normal causes like marriage and father. God says: *Allah creates what He pleases; when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it: "B" and it is* (3:47). In fact, everything is the

word of God; however, other things come into being through the agency of normal cause, while Jesus was born without some of the normal causes. That is why he was called "the Word".

and a spirit from Him: The spirit is from the command. God says: *Say: "The soul is from the command of my Lord…* " (17:85); as Jesus was the creative word, "Be" and it is a command, therefore, he was called "the spirit". We have discussed this verse in detail in the third volume of this book.[1]

…believe therefore in Allah and His messengers, and say not, Three. Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one God;…: It is based on the beginning clauses and springs from the words: *the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary is only a Messenger of Allah.* In this situation, you are obligated to believe in the prescribed way, that is, belief in God and His Lordship and His messengers (including Jesus) and their prophethood. "and say not, Three." Desist from the belief in trinity. This desistance or this belief in God and His messengers and rejection of trinity is good for you. "Three" refers to the three persons of trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We have discussed it in detail in the third chapter, "The Family of ʿImrān".

…far be it from His glory that He should have a son; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His;…: *Subhāna* (translated here as "far be it from His glory"). Grammatically, it is a cognate accusative for emphasis, with its verb, *usabbihu* (I glorify) omitted but understood; "that He should have a son" is attached to that accusative case. The meaning is: I glorify Him to the utmost degree that He should have a son. This is a parenthetical clause for acknowledging the glory of God. "Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His." It could be circumstantial clause or an independent sentence. Anyhow, it gives the proof why God has no son. A son resembles the father in the origin of his person and existence and development of his body. When all that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to God in its person and effects, and when He manages everything alone, then nothing in the universe can resemble Him. Consequently, nothing can be called "His offspring."

The connotation is that no existing thing can be called God's son; as such, the words, "whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth", are an extended metaphor to show that everything other than God belongs to Him. (The heavens and the earth themselves are included in this argument while they are not in the heavens or in the earth.

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1 *al-Mīzān,* (Eng.), vol.6, p.12. (*tr.*)

This verse contains imperative and prohibitive orders and gives a comprehensive guidance to their good in this world and the hereafter. That is why the speech ends with the words: *and Allah is sufficient for a Protector.* He is your guardian, manages your affairs, guides you to what is good for you and calls you to the straight path.

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٧٢﴾ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۖ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْتَنْكَفُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٧٣﴾

(4:172-173) ***The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him, and whoever disdains His worship and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself. Then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace; and as for those who disdain and are proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement. And they shall not find for themselves besides Allah a guardian or a helper.***

It is another argument for refutation of divinity of Messiah, no matter whether he is supposed to be son of God or one of the three persons of God. The Messiah is a servant of God and he by no means disdains worshipping God; even the Christians do not deny it as the Gospels found with them explicitly say that he was worshipping God; and it is unimaginable that a son who is similar to his father in origin and make-up would worship him; nor that he would worship his own self; nor for one of the three persons of trinity to worship the other two when he is equal in rank to them. We have already explained it while describing the affairs of Jesus in the third chapter, "The Family of ʿImrān".

The words, "nor do the angels who are near (to Him)", extend the talk to the angels because the argument exactly applies to them too, as the polytheists of Arabia used to say that they were the daughters of God. The sentence is a digression from the main topic.

The verse refers to Jesus as the Messiah and describes the angels as

the near ones; and in this way alludes to the reason why they would not disdain God's worship. How can Jesus disdain the worship of God when he is the Messiah; anointed and blessed; or the angels when they are near to God? Had there been any possibility of their disdaining God's worship, God would not have blessed Jesus nor brought the angels nearer. By the way, God has depicted Messiah too as the one near to God, as He says:… *worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter and of those who are made near (to Allah)*, (3:45).

***…and whoever disdains His worship and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself*:** It points to the condition of the Messiah and the angels, and gives the reason why they wouldn't disdain His worship. How can they do so when they know that those who disdain His worship and are proud—be they human beings, jinn or angels—will be gathered all together to Him and will be requited according to their deeds? The Messiah and the angels believe in Him and fear Him and know these realities.

We have said that the words, "and whoever disdains His worship and is proud" show that the Messiah and the near angels are fully aware that the ones who disdain shall be gathered to Him all together. This idea is depicted by the word, "and is proud". Mere disdaining, if it is not the result of pride, does not attract Divine wrath, as happens in those who are ignorant or weak; but if the Messiah and the angels were to disdain His worship it would only be a result of pride because they know the status of their Lord. The meaning of the verse would be that they are well aware that "whoever disdains His worship and is proud "

The words, "will gather them all together" encompass good servants as well as bad ones. This paves the way for the categorization coming in the next verse: *Then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace; and as for those who disdain and are proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement.*

***…And they shall not find for themselves besides Allah a guardian or a helper*:** The negation of guardian or helper stands face to face with their belief in Divinity of Messiah and the angels.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُبِينًا ﴿١٧٤﴾

(4:174) ***O people! Surely there has come to you manifest proof from***

your Lord and We have sent to you clear light

al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-Burhān* (exposition of argument). It is on the paradigm of *fuʾlān* like *al-rujhān.* Some people say that it is a verbal noun of *baraha, yabrahu* [it became white])."

In any case, it is a verbal noun. Sometimes, it is used in the meaning of active participle, e.g., when it is used for the argument and proof itself.

The light refers to the Qur'an as the word "sent down to you" shows. Possibly, the "manifest proof" also means the same. Thus, the two sentences do strengthen each other.

Another possibility: The light may mean the Prophet. This idea is strengthened when we see that the verse comes in the wake of the verses showing the truthfulness of the Prophet in his prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an from God; and then realize that the verse has branched from the previous verses. Also, the words of God in the coming verse: *and hold fast by Him,* support this view, as we have explained in the chapter of "The Family of ʿImrān" vr.101 (*And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path*) that holding fast to God means accepting His Book and following His Messenger.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِهِ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ
وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا ﴿١٧٥﴾

(4:175) *Then as for those who believe in Allah and hold fast by Him, He will cause them to enter into His mercy and grace and guide them to Himself on a straight path*

It describes the reward of those who follow the proof of their Lord and the light which has descended from Him. The verse is drawn from the preceding verse which describes the reward of those who believe and do good: *Then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace;…* (3:57). Perhaps, that is why this verse does not mention the recompense of those who shrink from following the proof and the light. As the same punishment as mentioned in the previous verse applies in this case too, there was no need to repeat it again; this verse has shown that the reward of the followers here is the same as that given to the followers in the preceding verse; and there are only two groups: the followers and the transgressors.

Accordingly, the clause in this verse, "He will cause them to enter into His mercy", goes parallel to: *He will pay them fully their rewards,* and it is the garden. And the word 'grace' in this verse is parallel to the clause in that verse: *and give them more out of His grace*. The ending clause, "and guide them to Himself on a straight path" gives the result of holding fast to God (mentioned in this verse) as God says: *And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path* (3:101).

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